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VOL. I.

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M. G. Tabor. 168.

JEANIE'S QUIET LIFE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"ST. OLAVE'S," "JANITA'S CROSS,"

"ALEC'S BRIDE,"

&c. &c.

"Tis only noble to be good."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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January Day 12, 1851 Peaking 80.

To my Godchild,

Hilda.



JEANIE'S QUIET LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

IT was a very old house, fronting the village church, having but a grassy footroad between its stone gateway, and those church-yard yew trees, upon whose black-cowled heads the snows of more than four centuries had fallen.

So near the village church, that at early morning time the dormer window of the chamber where for generations past the heirs of Lyneton Abbots had drawn their first breath, cast its shadow upon the east front of the church, quite into the chancel where those

same heirs of Lyneton Abbots lay buried, with folded hands and fast shut eyelids, beneath canopies of carved stone. And towards evening, when the sun was low, that east front in its turn darkened the dormer window of the old house; so that life and death, the cradle and the grave, seemed ever meeting and mingling there.

A mouldering, time-worn mansion, round whose high-pitched gables the untrimmed ivy wove many a fantastic wreath and spray, over whose grey stone facings the lichens crept in stains of russet brown, brightening into gold when the sunlight, slanting down through the branches of a great elm tree at the corner of the house, found room to strike upon them. And the swallows built their nests year by year under the overhanging eaves, and the robins chirped their merry

song among the clasping ivy-branches, and for seven successive springs a pair of impudent little sparrows had hatched, fed, and brought their family to maturity in the head gear of Siward, the old Abbot, whose effigy, very crumbling now, and dilapidated, stood within a niche over the great entrance.

Evidently it was a place whose best days were gone. The future would never give back what the past had taken away, when it gnawed down the fair carved work of that oriel window at the south end, and crumbled, inch by inch, the massive balustrades which once formed such a stately finish to the gravelled terrace in the front of the house. There would be no bringing back now, of the early pride and splendour of the home, no re-awakening of the old days, when lords in slashed doublets and silken hose, and ladies in

rustling attire, with fans, and ruffs and farthingales, had stepped about on that terrace, or stood for loving talk in the shadow of the oriel window; or filled with mirth, and song, and laughter, those dull wainscotted rooms, where now, from morning to night, scarce a footstep came to wake their slumbering echoes.

For there was an unkept, deserted air about the place. Not a comfortless air, though. The old house of Lyneton Abbots was a home still, and the gentle charities of home, if not its sweetest and tenderest, found room to nestle there, like late flowers among the withered leaves of autumn time, more beautiful for the stillness and decay which surround them. But the fortunes of its owners had not kept pace with their needs. The rent-roll of the Manor-house of Lyneton Abbots, once so rich and crowded, had slowly dwindled

down, as one by one the broad acres which belonged to it had been alienated to pay debts of honour, or portion younger sons, or give her dowry to some fair bride. Until now, that rent-roll scarce yielded enough to keep the home together, and left nothing over for the old state and hospitality which used to be dispensed there with such lordly pride.

Even the garden had that forlorn, uncultivated picturesqueness about it which comes with season after season of neglect; a picturesqueness which would be so far beyond the careful beauty of art, if it did not tell its own sad story of failing fortune and decaying life. For years and years the place had been left to itself. Along the buttressed stone wall, from whose widening crevices great tufts of house-leek burst forth, and patches of golden moss, the grape-vines clambered, holding on as best

they could to the gnarled remains of apricot and peach trees, weighed down here and there with clusters of fruit, which the warm September sunshine was just touching into purple. And where there was room for them to win a little of that sunshine, great branches of hops struggled upward, and hung their pale green tassels side by side with blue convolvulus bells, and crimson fuchsias which grew nowhere so richly as in the old garden of Lyneton Abbots Manor-house.

In front of the oriel window, almost over-topped by the rank grass, which for years no mower's scythe had kept down, was a dial of Queen Elizabeth's time, whose brazen gnomon counted off the hours on a plate traced over with cabalistic figures and signs of the zodiac, all of them well nigh rubbed out by centuries of damp and mildew, or only to be deci-

phered in delicate tracery work of moss which time had written over the old graver's handicraft. And farther away down the garden, amongst rose and lavender bushes and great clumps of Portugal laurel, was a fountain urn, held by stone dolphins, out of whose three gaping mouths as many rills of crystal water ought to have trickled into great conch shells beneath. But none ever did trickle out now, for the pipes which fed the old fountain had long ago got choked up, and only after some heavy summer shower did a few scant drops ooze forth and fall with lazy, leisurely splash among the flag stems and lily leaves. Those three old stone dolphins, like the Lynton Abbots people, had seen their most prosperous days.

Past this weedy, moss-choked fountain, the winding path stretched along, between high

fantastically cut box-tree borders, to a gateway surmounted by two stone griffins, with wide open, defiant jaws, and talons thrust out as though in act to tear to pieces any rash intruder that should dare to trespass, uninvited, across the portals of the ancient house. And thence it opened into the grassy footroad which led to St. Hilda's church, where so many noble knights and ladies, all of them bearing the Lyneton name, and once owning all the Lyneton pride and beauty, lay still enough now, their day's work done, beneath the chancel stones.

The village of Lyneton Abbots, so called from the homestead around which it lay, was just such a pleasant spot as the hand of busy progress has yet left in many a nook and corner of old England. It had all the legitimate appendages of a primitive village. There was a

green in the midst of it, skirted with thatched cottages, and planted with magnificent old chestnut trees, under whose shelter the old men used to sit in summer afternoons, talking over rustic gossip with the women whose day's work was done. There was also a Maypole, the centre of great merry-making during the yearly feast; and near to it, as though placed there to check the too roisterous outburst of such merry-making, was a pair of stocks; quite useless, however, now, as instruments of punishment, but yielding immense store of gratification to sundry little bare-footed children, who performed various gymnastic feats thereupon, greatly to the delight of such juvenile spectators as had neither marbles nor tops at their disposal for the employment of leisure time. There was a little brook, too, chattering along over stones and gravel right through the middle of the

village, an unfailing source of amusement to the more meditative lads, who fished in it for minnows, and sometimes, but at very rare intervals, caught them. And striking out from the place in all directions were narrow winding lanes, beneath whose hawthorn hedges, so rich in spring-time with stores of snowy blossom, the village youths and maidens used to saunter, to hear the nightingales, they said, though truly it was a sweeter music than any the nightingales could give which made those May evenings seem so short.

From St. Hilda's church a pleasant road crept along past cornfields and pasture-lands to the neighbouring town of Oresbridge, two miles away; the great, busy, manufacturing town, where a hundred and fifty thousand human souls toiled, and laboured, and strug-

gled, some upward to the shining gates of heaven, some quite elsewhither.

Eastward from Oresbridge was the iron and coal district, which brought yearly to the town so vast a revenue of wealth and misery, planting its outskirts with lordly villas and almost palace-like mansions; pouring into the coffers of its merchants and manufacturers uncounted thousands of gold and silver; sweeping up, too, into its lanes and alleys a festering mass of vice, and sin, and wretchedness, and thronging its gin-shops with haggard, pale-faced, stooping-shouldered men, whose growth had been checked when they were children by long labour in the mines. Sauntering through Lyneton Abbots after nightfall, you might see the hot breath of a hundred furnaces lighting up the eastern sky as with the glow of some tremendous

conflagration. And when all was still round the old homestead—when the hum of village life had hushed itself away—when the last note of thrush or blackbird had ceased from the tree-tops, and the little children were sleeping peacefully in their cradles, rocked with a mother's gentle lullaby, you might stand in that grassy foot-road between St. Hilda's church and the griffin-guarded gateway, and hear far off the many voices of the great town, the tramp of its myriad feet, the roar of its furnaces, the thunder of its hammers, the wail of its sadness, and the tumult of its mirth, all softened down into a murmur as of distant waves breaking and rolling back again into the wide ocean,—a murmur which even the flutter of a bird's wing in the leaves overhead, or the sighing of wind might overpower, so dim

was it and indistinct, though telling of so much labour and sorrow.

But sometimes the great sea of life in that toiling town of Oresbridge overflowed, touched with its outward ripple the quiet village which lay within high-water mark of its tide. On Saturdays, when the mills ceased work at mid-day, when the din and tumult of machinery had leave to rest for a few hours, and those huge furnaces no longer rolled out their tongues of lurid flame into the smoky air, clusters of sharp-faced, keen-eyed artificers might be seen strolling beneath the old trees upon the village green, or stunted, brawny-armed men, whose skins were darkened with heat from the smelting furnaces, or miners lean and smutched, or mechanics whose shabby clothes and hunger-sharpened eyes told of hard work

and scant wages. And these men, dwellers in Oresbridge garrets and cellars, looked wistfully at the sunlight trickling down through the white-blossomed chestnut-trees ; and they would stand by the churchyard gate with folded arms, hearing the lark carol his song of joy aloft towards the blue sky, which no smoke of furnace or tall chimney ever darkened ; until night came, and they must needs go back to the great town, and the toil, and the strife, and the suffering of the life appointed to them therein.

Excepting these weekly raids of loose hands from Oresbridge, who, besides loitering under white-blossomed chestnut trees at the churchyard gate, also thronged the ale-houses and disturbed the quiet of the village green with an occasional drunken brawl, Lynton Abbots was an orderly, well-conducted place. Its hard-hand-

ed labourers, well paid for the most part, and lightly worked, had the stolid, contented look of men for whom the days came and went with little care or anxiety. They were men whose spirits dwelt comfortably prisoned within the narrow limits of their daily lives. Having food and clothing, they were, in a sense surely quite otherwise than the Apostle Paul's, therewith content. Its women toiled cheerfully on by cottage fire-sides, getting ready their husband's dinners, mending their husband's clothes, tending the little children who were by-and-by to live a life as simple and narrow as their own. Its boys and girls romped on the village green, and thumbed their spelling-books at the village school, and heard sermons preached at the village church, and learned their duty to God and their neighbour out of the Shorter Catechism. Then year by year beheld them grow up into

youths and maidens, until that happy time came when they began to saunter through hawthorn lanes, beneath shelter of summer twilight, telling to each other the old, old story, which none will ever weary to repeat, none ever weary to hear ; which, whether told amid the din and tumult of the millioned-peopled city, through smoke of furnace and clang of many-handed labour, or listened to in the quiet of secluded village lanes, with not a sound to disturb it but rustle of leaves and song of birds, is still the one true story of the human heart, its best and sweetest and brightest.

And what of life in the old house by the church-yard ? The old house whose shadow fell at morn upon St. Hilda's church window, and which at night was darkened by that chancel window again. The old house under

? whose eaves swallows built and twittered, around
whose quaintly carved dormer windows the ivy
crept with many an untrimmed wreath and
spray. What of life in the old house at
Lyneton Abbots?

CHAPTER II.

IT was not so dreary as might have been expected from its external surroundings. Nay, as the world goes, it might have been called a happy life. Because if it lacked much outward show and brilliance, it was also free from that daily presence of care and sorrow, that grinding, hidden anxiety which wears the spring out of many a life long before its time.

Whatever dark or clinging memories the old house at Lyneton Abbots might have gathered in time past within the shadow of its oaken-panelled chambers, none such belonged to the people who dwelt in them now.

The deepest shadow which lay upon their lives was that which, sooner or later, must rest upon all, the tender, chastened thought of those who had been and were not.

Graham Lyneton, the present owner of the estate, had been twice married, but both his wives slept with the rest of the Lyneton race, in the chancel of St. Hilda's church. Some of the old people of the village still remembered the first Mrs. Lyneton, who had been dead now for nearly twenty years. She was a lady of majestic and noble presence, Mr. Lyneton's own cousin, who had not needed to change her name in taking his. Tall, fair, gracious, yet very proud, like all the Lyneton people; the last of a long line, who had given to England some of its bravest knights, and on whose escutcheon no blot rested of ignoble alliance or unworthy deed. They re-

membered her lustrous beauty, the calm stateliness of her ways ; with what a noble courtesy she used to bear herself amongst them ; how with kindly, queen-like grace she would linger at their cottage doors to ask after some aged or sickly one, quietly, as seemed one of such gentle birth, yet ever with a sort of cold reserve which held them back from telling her of their little troubles, or seeking her advice in any of those common sorrows in which a woman claims, as if by instinct, every other woman's sympathy, and receives it, too.

But they looked up to her with lowly reverence, as one quite apart from themselves ; and they were very proud of her for her beauty. And when Sunday after Sunday, leaning on her husband's arm, she came out of church, and went down that grassy path

under the yew trees, that path which was never used by any but the Manor-house people, they would gaze after her with longing, lingering looks, until her tall figure was quite out of sight behind the gateway. For in all the country round there was none so fair and noble, none who carried herself so grandly, or wore a smile so gracious as the Lady of Lyneton Abbots.

They had no children. It might be that which made her look sad sometimes, which brought almost a cramp of pain into her pale face, as she crossed the village green, where the lads and lasses were gambolling so merrily; or loitered at the threshold of some humble cottage, to watch the happy mother within playing with her babe, the little bright-eyed babe, who had just learned to laugh and crow, and give back smile for smile.

Perhaps the beautiful lady of Lyneton would have parted with all the bright jewels that shone upon her fair bosom, could she have laid a child of her own there; and perhaps its lord would have given up half his patrimony for the tread of little footsteps through those lonely halls of his, or the sound of baby voices through those grand old wainscotted rooms where now so many silent hours were passed.

Whatever it might be, however, that brought the look of pain and longing into Mrs. Lyneton's face, she did not wear that look long. One chilly autumn season, when dull November fogs were rotting the chestnut leaves upon the green, and the Lyneton hills scarce put off from morn to night their veil of grey mist, and the old elms in the Manor-house garden showed but a network of black

branches upon the darkening sky, her foot-step began to be missed from the cottage doors, and her low, quiet voice from the church prayers in which for the last three years the people had heard it mingle.

Then there was much passing of carriages up and down that grassy lane between the church and the old house, much looking up to one curtained window, where all night long, for many a week, a light was dimly burning, whilst patient watchers kept their vigil; and much anxious questioning amongst the village people, who loved the lady of Lynton Abbots very much, for all she was so stately and proud. Questions which needed not long to be repeated, for before the February snowdrops began to look out in the churchyard, the pestilential fever, which, bred in the dens and cellars of Oresbridge, crept

away through damp and mist to the out-lying villages, had done its work. Mr. Lynton was left a widower. A grand funeral train swept across under the yew trees to St. Hilda's church. A black hatchment was reared up in front of Abbot Siward's niche, above the doorway of Lynton Abbots Manor-house, and there was a sound of mourning, not loud, but deep, in that lonely, childless home.

Of course the village gossips began to talk. People always will when death takes one whose life has not been of the happiest or the brightest. Those who thought they knew as much about the Manor-house family as most, said, with many a shake of the head, and much sighing and regret, that although that quiet face of hers betrayed few secrets, yet perhaps it might be quite other than

November fogs or murky fever-taint from the great town of Oresbridge which had dimmed the light in Mrs. Lynton's once so bright eyes, and worn the dear life out of her, and laid her, all too soon, side by side with the ancient knights and dames of high degree who slept so peacefully under their carved canopies and marble headstones, round about the Manor-house pew. If great folks carried their troubles on their brows, the village gossips said, little folks would not pine so much for noble name and high descent, and the privilege of dwelling in splendid old family mansions, and being buried, when their turn came, beneath massive sculptured urns or mural tablets, which told forth such a grand array of estates and titles.

That might be only village gossip. Most likely it was nothing more. For Graham Lyne-

ton mourned his dead wife most truly. He did not show his grief, as some men do, by many tears and lamentations, much praising of the departed, much speaking of her virtues before friends and acquaintances, otherwise people might have given him credit for more feeling. It was never the way of the Lynetons to make much outward show over any grief of theirs. What was given them to suffer, they suffered very quietly. None of those knights and ladies in Lyneton Abbots church had been much wept over in public, much praised there, though their memories had been faithfully and lovingly kept through years of lonely, unspoken grief.

Mr. Lyneton manifested his sense of loss chiefly by withdrawing from society, which, as he had never mingled very freely in it, was not so much noticed as a great parade

of affliction would have been. He dropped, too, one after another, the out-door sports which he used to love so well. He scarcely ever went into company—very rarely received any at his own house. He lived almost entirely amongst his books and papers, now and then riding out over the moors with his aunt, Miss Hildegarde Lyneton, or strolling with his little sister Gwendoline through the woods which belonged to the estate.

There was nearly twenty years difference between Graham Lyneton and his sister Gwendoline. He was the eldest, she the youngest of the family. The sons and daughters who had been born between them were all dead, buried with the rest of the Lyneton people in St. Hilda's church. When, at five-and-twenty, Graham, having just succeeded to the paternal estate, mar-

ried his cousin, and brought her to the old house by the churchyard, Gwendoline was a sprightly child of six years old, fair and graceful, but with a certain lofty pride about her, even then, which made her brother call her in sport "Princess Gwendoline."

After Graham's marriage, the dowager Mrs. Lyneton took her little daughter, and went to reside in London with her sister-in-law, Miss Hildegarde Lyneton, a grand, stately spinster, who lived in a house as grand and stately as herself, in one of the squares at the West End, and who proposed this arrangement as suitable for keeping up the family dignity, the widow's jointure being scarcely sufficient to maintain herself and her daughter in such style as befitted the bearers of so noble a name.

It was not for long, however, that such

style needed to be kept up. The Lynetons were never a long-lived race. Gwendoline's mother died in London only a year after Graham's marriage, leaving the little girl to the guardianship of Aunt Hildegarde, who fulfilled her trust with severe conscientiousness, not unmixed with affection. She was a real Lynton, grave, reserved, dignified, having a steadfast love of kin, and a deep-rooted pride in the honour of the Lynton family. This last principle she instilled into little Gwendoline so thoroughly, that, for the very sake of the name she bore, the child would have scorned to do a mean thing, or cherish an unworthy thought. Not one of the Alicias, or Alithas, or Berengarias who lay under their stone canopies in St. Hilda's church, had borne their name more proudly, or cared more to keep it pure and spotless, than

this little Gwendoline, the youngest of the line.

After Graham's wife died, Aunt Hildegarde and her niece came down to the old home at Lyneton Abbots, and lived a very secluded life with him there, the stately spinster devoting herself, as heretofore, to the education of the young girl; training her in such old-fashioned accomplishments as she had been taught in her own youth; but, above all, forming her into the Lyneton mould of quietness and self-control. It was always the glory of the Lynetons to be self-controlled, to speak no word, or but few, to the herd of common people without, of the hopes, joys, and fears that stirred within them. Whether grief came to them or gladness, they took it alike quietly, and held it to themselves alone.

This quiet life lasted for two years. Then the family chanced to spend a September in

Scotland. The doctors said Mr. Lyneton must have change of air, and change of scene, and change of society. And change he certainly did have, even to an extent which they had never ventured to recommend. For after that visit to the Highlands, the Lord of the Manor shook off his solitary ways, and began to go out a little more into society. The old house by the churchyard was freshened up, the vines nailed to the mouldering wall, the ivy trimmed, the terrace-walk repaired and beautified, Abbot Siward's niche re-chiselled, the balustrades spoiled of their clinging moss and lichen, the place put into thorough order and neatness; and whilst the gossips of the village were still wondering what all these changes could portend, Mr. Lyneton of Lyneton Abbots brought home a new wife.

CHAPTER III.

SHE was a slight, delicate woman, but bright and cheery, as unlike the first Mrs. Lynton as one woman could be to another. A gentle little creature, with sunny blue eyes, and a winning smile, and a sweet Scottish accent, and pretty unassuming ways, more like those of a girl than of a full-grown married woman; ways, indeed, which seemed scarcely suitable to the mistress of the grand old homestead, though doubtless very pleasing to Mr. Lynton. For if, as men often do when they marry a second time, he had sought a complete contrast to his former wife, he had certainly met with it in the present instance.

Though how, when the first flush of bridal excitement had passed away, such a lady would suit him, the grave, austere, reserved master of Lyneton Abbots, the village gossips would not take upon themselves to say. Time would show.

Of course everyone expected that when Miss Hildegarde Lyneton went back to the stately old mansion at the West End, as she did after her nephew's second marriage, she would have taken Gwendoline with her. Gwendoline was nearly eleven years old now, ready for such masters as a second-rate place like Oresbridge could not supply. Very high-spirited, too, and with all the Lyneton will and determination about her; a serious undertaking, a *very* serious undertaking, for an amiable little creature like the second Mrs. Lyneton, who had evidently not the slightest

notion of managing or controlling anyone, except by the power of love, which was a very useless power, unless joined with a due amount of energy and decision. Doubtless Miss Hildegarde Lyneton would make a home for her niece in London, and superintend her education, and secure good masters for her, and, when the time came, introduce her into the best society, and arrange a splendid match for her with some young nobleman—her birth and beauty, if not her fortune, would qualify her for anything of that kind—and so her brother's marriage, instead of being any loss to her, so far as a comfortable home was concerned, would turn out to be a blessing in disguise.

But, to the utter astonishment of the upper-class village people, Gwendoline Lyneton remained with her brother after his second

marriage. Whether Miss Hildegarde, not approving of her nephew's choice, had withdrawn from her former intimate connection with the family, or whether Mr. Lyneton thought that his young sister, of whom he was of course the legal guardian, would be better for a change of influence, nobody ever found out; but certain it was that after the bridal gaieties were over, and Graham Lyneton and his wife had settled down to such home happiness as might be in store for them, little Gwendoline was always to be seen by Mrs. Lyneton's side as they rambled in the Lyneton Abbots woods, or went into the village to look after the poor people, or sat in the Manor-house pew, under that great black hatchment which had never been removed since the first Mrs. Lyneton's death. Was little Miss Gwendoline really going to

live with her new sister-in-law, then? Things began to look very much like it.

Then all the upper-class people of the place, who, being on calling terms at the old house by the churchyard, thought themselves at liberty to express their opinion about the proceedings of its inmates, the lawyer's wife, and the doctor's wife, and the bachelor clergyman's unmarried sister, and the maiden ladies who were gifted with discernment of character, shook their heads, and looked the thoughts which they were too much astonished to express in any other way.

It was a mistake—a grievous, irreparable mistake, one that Mr. Lyneton would find out before long, to his bitter confusion. Such a child as the new wife was, so very young and inexperienced; amiable, no doubt, and delightfully affectionate, quite a pattern of loving-

kindness and gentleness, and all that sort of thing, but utterly unqualified to grapple with a nature like that of Gwendoline's, or even to understand it, supposing that she had strength to grapple with it, it being so totally different to her own. If, when Mr. Lyneton made up his mind to marry again—and a decision of that kind was certainly not to be wondered at, for life at the Manor-house must have been a terribly dull affair of late, with that stately old Miss Hildegarde for a companion of it—if then, when Mr. Lyneton made up his mind to marry again, he intended his young sister to remain with him and be trained at home, he ought, as a matter of duty to the child, to have looked out for a woman of energy and spirit—a woman accustomed to the control and management of children—a woman who could have put little

Miss Gwendoline in her place and kept her there; kindly, of course, but still with a proper amount of judicious firmness such as, under present circumstances, was not at all likely to be exercised over her. That was the sort of woman Mr. Lyneton ought to have chosen for his second wife, and not this meek, gentle, sunny-faced little creature, scarcely more than a child herself, who, in customary show of bridal white, had lately made her appearance in the Manor-house pew, side by side with her grave, austere husband, who, though little over thirty, looked like a regular middle-aged man for quietness and decision of character.

And the lawyer's wife, and the doctor's wife, and the bachelor clergyman's unmarried sister, and the maiden ladies who were gifted with discernment of character, shook their

heads again, and prophesied unutterable uncomfortableness, if not something much worse than that, both to the determinate sister-in-law, and to the meek, affectionate little wife, who, as they saw from the beginning, was so totally unqualified to grapple with her responsibility; the very last person, in short, who ought to have been chosen to undertake such a responsibility.

For, as they said, they knew the Lyneton women better than the new wife could possibly know them; and little Gwendoline had the make of a real Lyneton in her, only waiting for a few years to develop it. Already there shone through that fair, quiet face of hers, so unchildlike in its gravity, a spirit which nothing could either bend or break, and a determination of purpose against which Mrs. Lyneton, poor thing! might set

herself as uselessly as the idle spray sets itself against the rocks. Admiring her lovely little sister-in-law now, as no one could help admiring the child, for her beauty and the grave, sweet stateliness of her ways, the new wife little thought what she would have to contend with by-and-bye, nor what power of steady resistance lay hidden beneath Gwendoline's gracious quietness.

To a certain extent they were quite correct in their judgment. The second Mrs Lyneton, who, until her marriage, had been brought up by a loving old grandmother in some secluded country place among the highlands of Scotland, was, as they expressed it, quite unfit to "grapple with" such a character as Gwendoline Lyneton's. And she knew it too, which was perhaps the most useful knowledge she could, under the circumstances, have possessed. And so she did

not try to grapple with her little sister-in-law, or keep her in her place, or exercise any such judicious authority over her, as the worthy wives and maiden ladies, who knew so exactly what was the proper course to be adopted, would have recommended, had Mrs. Lyneton been wise enough to ask their advice about the matter. But with the far finer instinct of a true womanly nature, she gave just what Gwendoline Lyneton needed, what she had never received so richly before,—loving-kindness, that sweet unselfish kindness, which, because it asks so little in return, wins so much. Offering that, she got what Gwendoline would have given for no other price, nor given even for that, had she not, with childhood's quick instinct, discovered beneath it a certain steadiness and quiet self-denial, on which her own strong nature could rest.

So once more all was bright and sunny enough in the old house at Lyneton Abbots. Mr. Lyneton seemed quite a new man since his marriage. True, he was grave and reserved still—that was an unchanging characteristic of all the Lyneton people; but the cold self-absorbed look wore off from his face, replaced by one of half concealed tenderness, as though he was too proud to show all the love he felt for that fair young Highland wife of his. And those who watched them as they sat together in the Manor-house pew, with the little Gwendoline nestling close up to them, said that he could scarcely have been known for the same austere, almost forbidding man, who used to lead such a lonely life in his ancient ancestral home.

That was a happy time too for Gwendoline, though the gossips had prophesied only misery

to her from this new, unexpected relationship. They were quite right in dowering Graham's sister with all the placid firmness of the Lynetons, but they did not know how much power of loving lay hidden away beneath, ready to be poured out upon those who had the wisdom to win it. The new wife had that wisdom. Mrs. Lyneton was by no means what is termed a gifted woman, fitted to shine in society and take the lead in conversation. She was loving and true, rather than brilliant and commanding; yet she did what a woman of more splendid attainments might have failed to do, she gained the love of her husband's young sister, and bound it to her by ties which were never broken again. She gave to Gwendoline what no one had ever given her before, since she was old enough to remember it, perfect trust, unquestioning love. Love so different from Aunt Hil-

degarde's stern affection, with its vigorous out-growth of axioms and proprieties; different, too, from Graham Lyneton's, for that, though true as steel, was often almost as cold.

Year by year, under the influence of such love so freely given and so freely returned, the girl Gwendoline's character blossomed into a beauty and tenderness, which, but for her new sister, she never could have known. Aunt Hildegarde had fostered all the pride and strength of her nature, the steadiness and self-restraint which long years of loneliness had made needful to herself. But there had been little of the warm sweet sunshine of love in that training, little to bring out the finer touches of sympathy and good will for those who might hereafter need help and comfort of her. Now, the true woman's life within her found room to grow. Over all the lofty steadfastness of her nature,

steadfastness which came to her, like her fair face and placid gentle ways, with the Lyneton name and the Lyneton blood, there grew by-and-by, like blossoms on Alpine rocks, the sweet flowers of trust and kindness and charity, more surely rooted, perhaps, for the very firmness of the soil on which they grew.

Until Death, which seemed as if it could not leave that old house at Lyneton Abbots long untouched, came again and took the bonnie, brown-haired wife away, and took with her all the sunshine and all the brightness and all the new rich store of joy which she had gathered there. And Graham Lyneton went back to his former loveless, secluded life, this time to come forth from it no more again. And another monumental brass, graven with mediæval device and armorial bearings, placed in the chancel of St. Hilda's church, told how Jean Wardour,

second wife of Graham Lyneton of Lyneton Abbots, had departed this life, sincerely loved and deeply lamented. And Gwendoline, a maiden of sixteen, now found herself alone, where once she had had such gentle companionship, and the old house by the church-yard was quiet as ever again.

Save for the quick step and the merry laugh of a little child, to whom Graham had given its mother's name of Jeanie.



CHAPTER IV.

THAT was the history of the Manor-house at Lyneton Abbots, since its present owner's first marriage. And that was the reason why the place looked so unkept and deserted now, though there was still an ancestral homeliness about it, which no neglect could ever destroy.

After Jean Wardour died, Mr. Lyneton never looked up again. That brief Indian summer of happiness past, he fell quietly into the autumn of middle age, from which no returning spring would rouse him any more.

“Quite an altered man,” as people used to

say, who met him riding down the most unfrequented roads, or, accompanied by his sister Gwendoline, slowly wandering through the woods which belonged to the estate. His hair was quite grey now, and his eyes had lost the Lynton brightness, and his face was worn with lines, not of age but sorrow. And there seemed no longer any spring or brightness in his life. All the love he could give, had been given to Jean Wardour. All that he could take for solace or comfort, had been shut away from him when she died. A quiet, settled, non-complaining melancholy wrapped itself around him. He drew himself away from all but those of his own household. It seemed a weariness to him to speak even a friendly word to those whom once he had welcomed to his fire-side, and treated with courteous Lynton hospitality. People spoke of him as "that poor Mr. Lyne-

ton," and looked after him, if they met him near the village, with longing, lingering pity. For he was indeed so sadly changed. Only a little of the former stateliness clung to him yet, just the shadow of that proud lofty bearing which had caused the master of Lyneton Abbots to be characterised, in his younger days, as one of the noblest gentlemen in all the country round.

Nothing in the way of repairs was done to the house after the second wife's death. Year after year passed over it, each one adding its stain of decay to the old stone moulding, and deepening the mossy garniture of Abbot Siward's cowl, and twining a richer tracery work of ivy round the tall gables, which cast their shadows at morning time, quite across to St. Hilda's church. And when the servants told their master of one part after another which

was almost falling to pieces for want of a little mason work, he would say—

“Never mind. Do not trouble me. The place will last my time.”

Then, if he was in the garden, he would resume that incessant walk up and down under the shelter of the stone wall, where the vine held forth its ripening clusters, and the tall convolvulus prisoned the sunlight within their purple bells. Or, if within doors, he would turn away to his books or papers again, or fold his hands for a fresh spell of silent meditation, never seeming to care much how things went on, or what decay time's finger wrought in the home of which he used to be so proud. His only reply to all they told him about it, was just that one little sentence—

“The place will last my time.”

So the old Manor-house held itself together

as well as it could, and the swallows built their nests undisturbed beneath its gables, and the sparrows reared their annual brood as heretofore in Abbot Siward's head-gear, finding a most eligible and sheltered family residence in that hollow, mossed cowl. And the ivy climbed at its own wild will, from gable to gable, almost covering the quaint little dormer windows, doing its best to hide the crumbling balustrades, or the worn mouldings which dropped away piece by piece, as storm and damp gnawed at them. And the lichens crept about in patches of russet brown and olive, flushing into gold where they had caught slant sunshine through the elm-tree leaves; and autumn by autumn the vine on the south wall was weighed down by its own purple-ripe clusters, and the hop tendrils climbed higher and higher in search of air and sun, and the dial told off the hours on a plate

whose cabalistic devices grew dimmer and dimmer as time drew his mossy finger across them.

And the patient stone dolphins that held up the fountain urn opened wide their mouths for the cool trickling stream that would never flow through them any more ; and the sweet English flowers grew and faded, as spring trembled into summer, and summer laid its weary head into the golden lap of autumn. And the old carved griffins over the gateway looked down, grim and defiant as ever, a tawny growth of moss and lichen filling their hollow eyeballs, and hanging beard-like from their opening jaws ; and over the homestead there settled year by year a deeper hush, a stillness that might be felt.

Year by year, until Graham Lyneton's second wife had been dead nine years, and Gwendoline was a woman of five and twenty.

A noble woman too, moving about that old mansion with a bearing as queenly as any of the ancient ladies, who, when the house was in its prime, and the Lyneton coffers fuller than ever they seemed likely to be again, had dispensed its hospitalities with so royal a grace. She was very like her cousin, the first Mrs. Lyneton, who had been carried out so many years ago, with all due pomp and circumstance, to the family vault in St. Hilda's church. Gwendoline's own mother, whom she could scarcely remember now, was one of the Hatherleigh Lynetons, the same branch of the family into which Graham had first married, and Gwendoline seemed to possess the distinctive features of the two ancient lines whose blood mingled in her veins. She had the grave quietness of the Lyneton Abbots people, the firmness which, if needful, could bear so much, the self-control

which ever told so little ; the pride of kin and steadfast unflinching honour, which needed no care of Aunt Hildegarde's to foster them. But the Hatherleigh Lynetons gave her their beauty. She had their grace of figure and fineness of mould ; their features, straight, delicate, clearly chiselled as those of the Greek marbles, almost as pale too, save for a passing glow of passion or emotion ; their eyes, level-browed, dark grey eyes, which could light up so rarely when feeling stirred the soul within ; their voice, low and clear, but with such a sound of purpose in it ; their placid, almost moveless calm, their unconquerable will and determination. And their gracious courteous ways to all, whether high or low, rich or poor, gentle or simple ; a courtesy like the graven flowers on some Damascus blade, lying so close to that which, if rudely touched, could wound so deeply, so cruelly.

But, most of all, the spirit of her race showed itself, and the pride of the erewhile Princess Gwendoline kindled within those great quiet grey eyes, if Mr. Lyneton roused himself, as he could even now sometimes rouse himself when the mood was upon him, to tell of the brave deeds and spotless lives of the old Lynetons of Lyneton Abbots.

For in winter evenings, as he sat with his sister and the child Jeanie in that oriel room, whose oak-panelled walls were covered with dim, faded family portraits, he would relate to them how, in those early days of civil war and bloodshed, or those still earlier days when men went forth to rescue Jerusalem from the Saracen's hand, the Lyneton knights fought so bravely and died so fearlessly. For neither wife nor children, home nor love, had held them back when the battle-field rang out its

stirring cry, and there was work to be done for king and country there. And when the war of the Roses emptied so many stately old homes, bidding their warlike lords gather themselves beneath banner of red or white, and either die or conquer in the fight, the bearers of the Lyneton name had been so brave, had fought so desperately for the red rose of the royal Margaret, giving their lives to save it from its pale enemy of York, counting nothing dear to them but how they might be true to her, the noble warrior queen, and give her back what rude, usurping hands had wrenched away.

Then Gwendoline's eyes flashed, and her pale face used to kindle into rosy pride, as she listened to such stories as these, told in the very home where these same knights had lived, through whose guarded gateway they

had gone forth to danger and to death ; so near the old church of St. Hilda too, where those of them who had not found a grave on the battle-field, lay now, their work all done, no need of spear or shield or baldric any more ; over them a name carved which never breath of calumny had dared to touch, so stainless was its honour, so noble the men who claimed it for their own.

It was very seldom, though, that Mr. Lyneton roused up in this way. For the most part he used to sit alone in the dusty old library, or spend his time in strolling through the woods, which, since the second Mrs. Lyneton's death, had been strictly closed against all intruders. Sometimes Miss Hildegarde Lyneton used to come down for a few days, and take Gwendoline back with her to London, where she introduced her into gay society, and gathered round

her those who were worthy, for their noble lineage, to clasp hands with her; but with the exception of these visits, and a state dinner given once or twice a year for the upper-class village people, Graham Lyneton and his sister lived a life whose peaceful, monotonous seclusion even a hermit might have envied.

"The very image of her cousin," as the people who could remember the first Mrs. Lyneton used to say, as they watched Gwendoline coming down the village street, or turned away from their prayer-books to see the tall, slight figure bent low as she knelt by her brother Graham's side in the Manor-house pew. Just so, twenty years ago, Mrs. Lyneton, of the Hatherleigh Lynetons, had knelt there, the morning sunlight pouring in through the east window, falling upon braided hair of the same yellow hue, and a cheek so colourless, save for

the rosy glow which St. Christopher's robe cast upon it.

Only there was a look sometimes on Gwendoline's face, which no one ever saw upon her cousin's, when the first Mrs. Lyneton came to be mistress of the old home by the churchyard. A look of patient longing, overmastering its loftiness ; a light as of some sweet memory or sweeter hope, which, shining through all the steadfast calm, brightened it as sunrise brightens the grey morning twilight.

Such a look the Lady Hildegarde Lyneton might have worn, centuries ago, in those ten long years when she waited for her soldier lover ; he far away in Palestine fighting the Saracens there, she living a lonely life at home for his sake, trusting him so faithfully, waiting for him so patiently, loving him so truly, as the Lyneton women always loved. Such a look

the sailor lad's betrothed maiden may wear, when at night she hears the sad sea waves rocking upon the shore and thinks of him crossing the Atlantic, thousands of miles away, girt round with dangers seen and unseen, yet girt more closely with her prayers.

It was that look which made the little children curtsey with loving reverence when they passed Gwendoline Lyneton in the grassy path by the churchyard. And the labourers, meeting her as they came home from work, doffed their caps, and felt, as they looked into her face, new thoughts stirred within them, thoughts strangely above the rude, low life which daily closed them round; thoughts which had a sort of Sunday quietness about them, like those which come with the sound of church bells, or whispered words of prayer.

And Jeanie Lyneton, sitting in the oriel

window sometimes, and seeing that rare look on Gwendoline's face, breaking through all its statue-like calmness, used to remember her favourite ballad of the "Nut-browne Mayde," quaint old rhyme of woman's love that held so fast through sorrow and doubt and scorn, never losing one gleam of its brightness when danger seemed near at hand, nor even wavering when he to whom it had been given sought to prove her by feigned forgetfulness and falsehood. And Jeanie wondered if the cruel knight looked upon such a face as Gwendoline's, when he tried his lady's love so hardly, and found it ring so true.

"Sith I have here been partynere
With you of joye and blysse ;
I muste alsoe, part of your wo,
Endure, as reason is.
Yet am I sure of one plesure,
And shortly, it is this :

That where ye be, it seemeth pardè,
I colde not fare amysse.
Withoute more speche, I you beseche,
That we were soone agone ;
For in my minde, of alle mankynde,
I love but you alone."

CHAPTER V.

JEANIE was nearly seventeen now ; a bright affectionate girl, just like what her mother used to be, when, in the sunny freshness of her youth, she had come, a bride, to the old house at Lyneton Abbots.

She had lived a very quiet, unconventional life there, chiefly under the care of her aunt Gwendoline, who gladly rendered to the child now some measure of the tender loving-kindness which, in years past, she had received from that child's mother. Miss Hildegarde Lyneton was, on the whole, tolerably kind to her grand-niece. She stood god-mother to her, along with

Gwendoline, when she was christened; and in her visits to Lyneton Abbots since then, had heard her go through the Church catechism, and given her a splendidly bound Bible and prayer-book, which were kept in a morocco case, under lock and key, in the Manor-house pew, as soon as the little girl was able to go to church and read them. And she also instilled into her, from time to time, a few judicious maxims about deportment and self-control, and the serious responsibilities which devolved upon her as the last representative of so ancient and noble a line of ancestry; to which maxims Jeanie listened with awe-stricken gravity, there was something so truly imposing in Aunt Hildegarde's looks and accent when she uttered them. And, as a finale to these acts of godmotherly duty, the stately spinster had promised her grand-niece a visit to London so

soon as she should be old enough to go out into society. During which visit she was to be introduced, as her aunt Gwendoline had been introduced, six or eight years ago, into the charmed circle of gaiety, and make her appearance at balls, concerts, theatres, operas, and all other suitable amusements, under the chaperonage of the stately old spinster, who, however, only held out this brilliant prospect to her on condition that she prepared herself for it, by all due diligence in her studies, and by cultivating such grace of deportment and manner, as should fit her for the society in which Miss Hildegarde Lyneton moved.

Jeanie had very little of regular school training. Mr. Lyneton did not like to send her away from him, to any of the fashionable boarding establishments of London or elsewhere, in which she might have been moulded accord-

ing to the most approved style of young ladyhood ; and as little did he feel disposed to break in upon the long established quiet of the Manor-house, by introducing there a lady who might be qualified to carry on the important work of his daughter's education at home. So those accomplishments which were needful for her station, Jeanie learned from masters who came over from Oresbridge. Her church catechism, as stated before, she committed to memory under the direction of Aunt Hildegarde ; and for all the rest of her training, she was indebted to her father and Gwendoline. Or perhaps, most of all, to what she got from the dusty old wainscoted library, her favourite retreat on winter evenings and rainy days ; for on its worm-eaten shelves she found many a true friend, whose noble thoughts, told sometimes in legend or romance, sometimes in quaint

rhyme or troubadour ballad, did their own work in cherishing a noble womanly life within her. If they left her ignorant of a few modern conventions, and painfully misinformed as to the best means of achieving a brilliant position in fashionable society, they taught her to believe, as few do believe, in man's honour and woman's truth ; a faith worth perhaps the loss of a few advantages which modern boarding-school training might have given her.

And then, in those winter evenings when they all three sat together in the oriel room, she heard her father tell the histories of the old Lynton knights, how bravely and spotlessly they had lived, how nobly they had fought for God and their country, how worthily they had borne the name which now she bore. And Aunt Gwendoline, who had heard all about them from old Miss Hildegarde, told her many

a story of the Lyneton women, women who were so pure and steadfast, who had left within that ancient homestead memories so precious, and fragrance of gentle deeds which could never die out; and cherished within her a noble longing to become like them, to live with their lofty purpose, to love with their lowly steadfastness—a woman's true love being ever the highest form of lowness—to die with their fearlessness, and then to live again in the memories of those who came after her, as they lived now, a name for all that was gentle and pure and good.

So that Jeanie, if slightly deficient in the usual branches of a sound English education, philosophy, use of the globes, cube root, square root, &c., and not knowing quite so much as some girls know about heights of mountains, lengths of principal rivers in South America,

populations of great cities, and latitudes and longitudes of the leading places in Europe, had yet passed through another sort of training quite as useful in its way. A training which gave to her a noble idea of womanhood, a true love of justice, a hatred of wrong and oppression, howsoever shown, whether in great nations or little families ; a fine appreciation of bravery and generosity, and a desire to follow, in her own quiet life, that example of faithfulness and devotion and purity which others had left behind them. A training that, which few French governesses or Parisian finishing establishments could have bettered.

Then, for out-door companions she had the old serving-man, whose brain was a vast storehouse of fairy-tales and traditions ; and Rollo, the Newfoundland dog, with whom she had many a romp, to the imminent peril of the

flower-beds and the box borders, and even of the three stone dolphins themselves, whose open mouths formed an admirable receptacle for the sticks and stones which Rollo was to leap for and then bring back to his little mistress. And when she was tired of Rollo or the serving-man, Rose Beresford, a child about her own age, who had come to stay at the Rectory, was always ready for a swing, or a game at battledore on the over-grown grass plot, or hide and seek amongst those great Portugal laurels and lilac bushes at the shady end of the garden. But Rose only staid at the Rectory a few weeks, and then went back again to her friends in Ireland, and from that time until now, when she was nearly seventeen years of age, Jeanie Lyneton had been dependent for society upon her father, Aunt Gwendoline, and the old library; three tried and trusty friends,

amongst whom she managed to make a very pleasant thing of life.

She was a bright-looking girl, with her mother's blue eyes and sunny brown hair, and girlish, unaffected ways. Indeed those who could remember the first and second Mrs. Lynetons, used to say, as they saw Mr. Lyneton's sister and daughter sitting together in the Manor-house pew, that he might almost fancy his two wives had come back to life again—supposing any man ever *could* fancy such an awkward possibility—so exactly did they seem to be reproduced in the present ladies of the family, not only in outward look and bearing, but in character too, so far as that could be judged of from the very slight intercourse which the Lyneton Abbots people were accustomed to hold with their neighbours.

For Jeanie had little of the Lyneton pride

and stateliness about her. It remained yet to be proved whether she had much of the firmness and strength of will which, in centuries past, had nerved the Lyneton women to such steady endurance and such noble faithfulness; endurance and faithfulness sung of eloquently enough in many of the old ballads and romances which Jeanie loved so well, or which had been handed down from generation to generation in household story and tradition.

True, there was not wanting, even in Jeanie Lyneton, though, a touch of reserve, the faintest little chill of hauteur with strangers, or with the upper-class families of the village, who were on calling terms at the Manor-house. She had inherited from her father just as much as marked her of the Lyneton race; all the rest, her pretty, gentle ways, her guileless look and fair open countenance, came to her from the

bonnie Highland lady, whose brief sojourn in the old house at Lyneton Abbots was yet remembered by its retainers as a sunny spot in their lives.

The Manor-house people were always very much talked about in the village. Holding themselves apart from its society, having but slight intercourse with the so-called aristocracy of the place, the clergyman, the lawyer, the doctor, and the maiden ladies of genteel extraction, whatever could be gathered up of their life and conduct was seized and commented upon, not always to their advantage. Mrs. Lucombe, the doctor's wife, considered it quite a slight upon her position in the village that she was not received with more cordiality at the Manor-house; and she did not fail to take what satisfaction she could for that slight, by making invidious remarks upon those who

had offered it. Because although her family might not be of so much distinction as the Lynetons, and though she could not look back upon such a long line of ancestry, still, in a small place like Lyneton Abbots, the doctor and his lady, especially if they were people of education—as she was proud to say both herself and her husband were, she having been at school on the Continent in her younger days—were always received on a footing of familiar acquaintance, if not of intimate friendship, even amongst the decidedly upper-class families; which position had never been awarded to her by the Lyneton Abbots people. And she certainly *did* think, that in consideration of Mr. Lucombe's long connection with the family, he having been their medical attendant ever since the first Mrs. Lyneton's removal, she might have been asked in now and then in a friend-

ly way, just for a cup of tea in an evening, and a little confidential chat afterwards, instead of being put off with a state dinner once a year, and the very stiffest of moves when they happened to meet in the village, or coming out of church on a Sunday morning.

That sort of thing Mrs. Lucombe said showed a want of cordiality, and a disposition, on the part of Miss Lyneton and her brother, to set themselves too much above the rest of the people. Which was a thing they had no right to do, money being so scarce with them just then, as everybody said it was, and Mr. Lyneton being put to it almost past his ability to keep things together in their usual style. Everybody knew well enough that, in spite of his splendid pedigree, Mr. Lyneton was a wretched man of business, the merest noodle at management that ever was seen, and had let his

estate get into such a state that it could scarcely keep the family going, to say nothing of portions for his sister and daughter when they married, as, poor things! they were most likely expecting to do; though where the husbands were to come from, was a question she could not take upon herself to answer, seeing that Mr. Lynton kept himself so much to himself, and never took his family into society, where they were likely to meet with anything eligible in a matrimonial point of view. It was really nothing short of sinful for a man with a marriageable sister and daughter, like Mr. Lynton, to keep them shut up from January to December in that old house by the church-yard, never asking anybody to the place, or putting them in the way of being settled suitably to their position. A man ought to be ashamed of himself to act in that selfish way, when other people were de-

pendent upon him for their prospects in life.

Mrs. Jacques, the lawyer's wife, to whom Mrs. Lucombe, the doctor's wife, thus imparted her private sentiments, said that for her part she cordially acquiesced in them. For she had thought, ever since she came to the village, that the Lynetons held themselves apart from the rest of the people in a way that was not becoming, considering how very little of the needful they had to keep up their pretensions. And especially in such a small place, where everybody was expected to be on pleasant terms with everybody else, and to do all that could be done in the way of social intercourse. And though she had not Mrs. Lucombe's claim to intimacy at the Manor-house, having only come to the village within the last few years, still she thought that her previous position in the country town of Grantford, where her husband had been

a most influential member of the corporation before he took the late Mr. Langton's law-practice at Oresbridge, ought to have entitled her to at least cordiality, on the part of the Manor-house people; a cordiality which certainly had never been extended to her yet, nothing having passed between them up to the present time except the most distant civility, not even a call of ceremony, to say nothing of invitations to dinner or attentions of that sort, which professional people generally expected when they came to a fresh neighbourhood.

Mrs. Jacques said that she could not understand parties holding themselves so very much aloof. It was what she had never been accustomed to, even from families whose landed property was much more considerable than Mr. Lyneton's, and whose balance at the bankers was in a much more satisfactory condition than,

by all accounts, his appeared to be at the present time. Indeed she had heard it whispered—though she should not like such a thing mentioned as coming from her, there was no knowing how far things went when once they began to be repeated—but she *had* heard it whispered that it was almost more than the master of Lyneton Abbots could do to hold his position at all, and keep up the customary establishment of servants, and carriages, and all that sort of thing, which the Lyneton people had been accustomed to. And really, for her own part, she should not feel very much distressed if things *did* come to a crisis, and they had to leave the place entirely for a time. Exclusiveness was a thing she could not tolerate, especially when there was nothing to keep it up with, and the sooner it was put a stop to, in some way or other, the better.

CHAPTER VI.

SO Mrs. Jacques said. And then the maiden ladies of genteel extraction and small investments in the three per cents, put in their word, and said their little say about the extreme reserve and retirement of the Lyneton Abbots people. And when they had turned these over and over, and round and round, and looked at them in every possible light, and made every variety of remark that could be made upon them, they proceeded to the matrimonial prospects of the Misses Lyneton, aunt and niece, and subjected them to an equally severe criticism.

It certainly was very strange, they said, that

Mr. Lyneton's sister had never married. Young, not more than five-and-twenty they were sure, beautiful, high-bred, belonging to one of the oldest families in the county, with everything to recommend her, but a well filled purse, it was unaccountably curious that she should have remained single so long. Because, though facilities for a prosperous matrimonial settlement at Lyneton Abbots were very scanty, owing to the selfish love of retirement which prevented Mr. Lyneton from introducing the ladies of his family into society as they ought to be introduced, still she had had very good opportunities in London. Miss Hildegarde Lyneton mixed with a very good circle there, and had had her niece with her very frequently, since she was of a proper age to go into company; and would doubtless forward her interests much more than Mr. Lyneton, living

shut up in that old Manor-house from year to year, would ever think it worth his pains to do ; and yet nothing seemed to come of it. It was very strange. They could not understand it at all.

They knew one thing though. Gwendoline Lyneton did not keep that noble name of hers, year after year, because no one had asked her to change it. They could tell of several gallant gentlemen, not so long ago, some military men, some in the style and habit of clergymen, one or two with the fashionable flash of the mercantile aristocracy, who had been seen loitering in the old garden, on different occasions, or attending Miss Lyneton to St. Hilda's church, or riding by her side, when with light touch she guided her fiery little Arabian steed over the moors of Lyneton Abbots. Gentlemen who had well-filled purses, and bulky rent-rolls,

and a good pedigree—some of them at any rate—and homes far more princely than that tumble-down old mansion, whose owner, if report said true, was too poor to keep it in a decent state of preservation. And it was Miss Lyneton's hand that these gentlemen came to ask from the lord of the manor, and her love that they came to win, and it was her proud name they would fain have persuaded her to exchange for their well-filled purses and bulky rent-rolls and splendidly furnished homes.

But they had gone away, one after another, never to make their appearance any more in the old garden, or the Manor-house pew, or by Miss Lyneton's side on the moorland roads. Why, the gossips could not tell, unless the lord of the manor was hard to please, or the lady slow to be won. And now for some months past, no gay cavalier from a distance had reined

up his steed before that old griffin-guarded gateway. Miss Lyneton had taken her walks and rides alone, always alone, except for her grave, quiet brother, and this fair-faced young niece, fast flushing into womanhood now, ready in her turn to break the hearts and bewilder the brains of over-susceptible gentlemen.

Indeed, although Mrs. Lucombe had given it as her opinion that the obstinately reserved habits of the lord of the manor would consign both his sister and daughter to spinsterhood, and though the Lyneton Abbots family never went into company, never attended any of the Oresbridge balls, concerts, public assemblies, or other recognised facilities for getting themselves well settled in life, yet the indefatigable gossips thought they had already got scent of something which might lead to matrimonial results for Mr. Lyneton's daughter.

Had not young Mr. Allington, they said, the collegian who was reading with the Lyneton Abbots clergyman, been seen more than once at church, casting admiring glances in the direction of the Manor-house pew, where Miss Jeanie Lyneton sat, looking so pretty and unconscious? Though of course she must have known well enough all the time who was taking so much notice of her, he being the favourite nephew of a bachelor baronet, and of most enviable prospects. And when Miss Maberley, the clergyman's sister, who of course had the best opportunities in the world for judging of any little matter of that sort, was asked for her opinion on the subject, did she not tell of evening after evening spent by Mr. Allington at the Manor-house, under pretence of looking over some old books in the library, very rare and valuable folios, which were to be got from

no other library in the neighbourhood? But, as Miss Maberley knew well enough, the only book he cared to read was Miss Jeanie's face; and she would venture to say, if the truth were confessed, he could not so much as tell the name of one of the musty old folios or quartos from which he pretended to be making such lengthy extracts, to help him in reading for his degree, he said. All very fine, but Miss Maberley thought it was something altogether different from a bachelor's degree that young Martin Allington was seeking, night after night, in the musty old library at Lyneton Abbots.

Miss Maberley said too, and nobody contradicted her for saying it, that Mr. Lyneton might do worse for his pretty young daughter than give her to Sir William Allington's nephew; for the old baronet was positively rolling in wealth, and had more than one good

living in his gift, and thought all the world of Martin ; and, with a cheque or two which would never be missed from his banker's account, could keep the lord of the Manor going, or set him on his feet again, if, as report whispered, things were getting into such a terribly tangled state with him.

So the upper-class people used to gossip on as they made their morning calls or assembled for friendly cups of tea in each other's snug little drawing-rooms. And still life wore on its even round in the old house at Lyneton Abbots. "Mr. Lyneton, poor man," as people nearly always called him now, paced up and down by the vine-laden wall, dreaming maybe of life's bygone brightness, which would never come back to him any more ; or perhaps puzzling his weary brain over the management of the estate, which was, as the gossips said,

getting into a terribly tangled condition. Indeed, it was so far beyond his control now, that he was trying to meet with someone who would take the accounts in hand, and look after the balancing of the weekly list, and the ingathering of the rents. And he was at the present time in correspondence with a young man who was coming as clerk to one of the great iron-masters of Oresbridge, and who had a spare afternoon every week, which he wished to employ in some book-keeping engagement. Perhaps then things would begin to look up a little, and the estate might be got into something like order. At any rate, a change of some kind must be made in the management of it, or it would soon come to complete ruin.

Gwendoline Lyneton too, not knowing what the little gossiping world said of her, lived on her own quiet life, apart as it had ever been,

except in those few years of the second Mrs. Lyneton's time, from much sympathy or kindness, hers not being a nature that could stretch out far for either. The outward life which she had to live was lived with all gravity and graciousness. Of the inner life, that life which rayed sometimes through the paleness of her face, a light as from some holy shrine within, no one had any need to ask. It belonged to herself alone, and held within it a joy with which no stranger could intermeddle. If it held doubt or fear sometimes, that also, like the joy, was for herself alone.

Only, month by month, as the time drew on for the Indian mails to be delivered, there would be the faintest gleam of excitement in those great grey eyes, and a touch of restlessness on the face which was generally so meek and still. She would sit at one of the little dormer windows,

hour after hour, listening for the postman's step, the sound of his knock echoing through the old house. If the letter came, that rare light deepened in her eyes. If it did not come, she waited patiently for the next month's tidings, never showing by word or look that any hope of hers had been disappointed, never giving possible trouble or anxiety of her own leave to break that girded calm which was almost the Lyneton badge, so strangely did it seem inwrought into their characters.

Jeanie knew whence those letters came, and was always glad for the brightness which they put into her aunt's life. She could just remember a tall, military-looking man, who used to play with her, and toss her about, five or six years ago, when she was a little girl in pinafores; and give her sweets too, which had been brought all the way from Oresbridge; dainty

bonbons, with mottoes and devices, the like of which could never be got, for love or money, from the goodstuff woman's shop on the village green. And he would swing her sometimes for half an hour together, on the old swing under the apple tree at the back of the house, always making her kiss him when the swing was done ; which she did not like at all, for his moustache scrubbed her cheek almost as roughly as Nurse Appleton's terrible bath towel. If it had not been for that, though, she should have liked him very much, for he was so bright and merry.

And she had also a very dim recollection of seeing him, a year or two later than that, standing with Aunt Gwendoline at the garden gate, one summer evening when it was growing dusk. They were talking together under the old stone griffins, almost hidden by the

shadow of the trees, which were so thick and green in that July time. Then he had gone away down the Oresbridge road, but Aunt Gwendoline staid just where he left her, there in the shadow of the trees, until the daylight had all gone, and the stars began to peep out one by one, and, like the glare of far off burning houses, the red glow of the Oresbridge furnaces could be seen upon the eastern sky.

After that evening Jeanie never had any more swings, never any more romps among the flower beds of the old-fashioned garden, or sugared bonbons, with coloured mottoes and devices upon them. And she thought that, if Mr. Demeron had been as kind to someone else as he had been to herself, Aunt Gwendoline must miss him very much indeed.

That was all Jeanie knew. Nor, as the years wore on, one after another, did she ever know

any more than that. For Mr. Demeron's name was not often spoken amongst them, and though the letters which came now and then were read aloud and commented upon, without any sort of reserve, yet there was little in them that interested her. They told of a life in which she had neither part nor lot; chiefly about barrack experiences, and gay doings in Bombay society, and sometimes a hunting expedition up the country, or a few inquiries about Lyneton Abbots, never anything more than that. Only Aunt Gwendoline's face always brightened when they came, and so Jeanie was glad to see those Indian letters, though she never cared very much to hear them read.

But one Sunday morning in church, the clergyman had to take for his first lesson, the story of Jacob's sojourn with Laban. Reading it, he came to that little verse, over which, for

thousands of years, men have wept and wondered; that little verse wherein the great God has not thought it beneath his greatness to embalm a story of human love, and send it down to us upon the stream of time, pure, sweet, fresh as when, in the childhood of our race, it was first lived, and told, and written.

“Jacob served seven years for Rachel his wife ; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love which he had to her.”

Jeanie looked up to her aunt’s face just then, and saw the well-remembered smile upon it.

CHAPTER VII.

THAT was Gwendoline Lyneton's love story.

The only one she had ever known, the only one she would ever care to know. That was why the noble gentlemen who came, on matrimonial thoughts intent, to the old house at Lyneton Abbots, departed with sadder countenances than when they came, to place their well-filled purses and bulky rent-rolls and broad acres and splendidly-furnished mansions, to say nothing of their transferable affections, at the feet of some less fastidious maiden. Until by-and-by the suitors ceased to come. There was no more reining up of mettled steeds at the gates which led out into the foot-road by the

church-yard. There were no more conferences with Mr. Lyneton in the oak wainscoted library, conferences always ending gloomily enough for one of the parties concerned in them; and no more studiously courteous farewells in that stone porch, Abbot Siward, meanwhile, looking down on the departing guest from beneath that crumbling cowl of his, with quaint, grave face that promised to reveal no secrets, nor betray the disappointment that had come to pass. Trusty Abbot Siward, who, from his niche over the doorway, saw so much, and told so little; whose stony, lichen-bearded lips never moved for smile or jeer, as the spruce cavaliers rode away down that narrow grassy path, with no lingering backward look for wave of lady's kerchief from the balustraded terrace, or bright glance of lady's eyes from the ivied dormer windows.

Gwendoline Lyneton wanted no love of theirs.

All that she could give, had been given already. Far across the seas was one, who, taking the treasure of her heart with him, had left her his. And now she only waited until the slow years, passing one by one, should bring him to her again, and give to her life its full joy and crown.

Yet no formal word of this had ever been spoken between them. They knew that they belonged to each other always, but they were quite free. For when, five years ago now, Maurice Demeron first came to Lyneton Abbots, came with his father, an old college companion of Mr. Lyneton's, for a day's shooting over the moors round the estate, and the two days had lengthened into four, and the four into a whole long week, wherein there had been many a sweet ramble with Gwendoline through the laurel shaded walks of the old garden, many a quiet talk among the maple copses, and much

learned, which, for one of them at least, could never be quite unlearned again; when, five years ago, Maurice Demeron first came to the Manor-house and met Mr. Lyneton's fair sister, "Greta" as he used to call her, because she was so like the Lady Margareta of Hatherleigh Lyneton, whose portrait hung in the oriel room, they were both of them young, too young, Maurice Demeron's discreet father said, to think of burdening themselves with the responsibilities of married life. And he, though of good family and fair prospects, having just got an Indian commission, was poor too, and being, like the Lyneton people proud of spirit, he thought scorn to bind down, by vow or promise, a girl to whom for many years he could offer neither home nor position in return for the love which she gave him. He admired her very much. He had seen no one like her in all that young, untried,

happy life of his. She was the one, he thought, to fill up his heart and brighten his whole future; but he could not tell her so yet, save by the un-spoken language of many a tender look and tone. He was too proud to ask his precious gift from Mr. Lyneton until he could take and keep it always. He must toil through those five long years of Indian service; he must get for himself an honourable name and a good position. Having done this, he would come home, and as a brave soldier claim the prize which as a boyish lover he scarcely dared to ask.

And so, as they two had stood together at the gate on that July night, just before he went away to Southampton to embark for foreign service, he had only said to her,

“We can trust each other, Greta.”

To which she had answered, with all the firm self-control of the old Lynetons—a

control which would so rarely let them tell by word or look all that lay beneath it,

“Yes; we can trust each other.”

And then he had said good-bye to her, and gone away, both of them knowing that five long years must pass before they could meet again. Five long years, in which they might find new friends, or cherish new loves, or haply die, and so only clasp hands again where they should belong to each other for ever.

That was how they parted; the question which should have bound them together unasked, unanswered, save by just these words,

“We can trust each other.”

Yet through all these years, Gwendoline had been true to him. What the Lynetons gave once they gave for ever, let the gift

cost what it might. Many a family history, handed down from father to son, through long generations past, told how faithfully those ancient knights and ladies, resting now in St. Hilda's church, had kept their troth, once given, through long years, and even through a life-time of patient waiting. For it was never known yet that a Lyneton's word had failed, or a Lyneton's promise betrayed any who trusted it.

And, though she could only gather it from chance sentences, and allusions in those letters of his which were always written to her father, and considered as public property in the family, yet Gwendoline felt, with a woman's instinct, that he was true to her. No word, no bond, no signed deed or betrothal ring could have given them to each other more entirely than that last farewell, spoken in the

dusky stillness of the July night—"We can trust each other, Greta."

Yet sometimes she doubted. Perhaps it was the very truth of her own heart which made her do so. When month after month passed, and no letter came; not a word to tell that she was held in remembrance as faithful as that which she gave; or when the letter did come, and her quick eye, glancing over it, could single out no sweet sentence which might hold for herself far other meaning than it bore to careless readers,—just a mere detail of barrack life, its frequent episodes of gaiety, balls at Government House, hunting parties with the staff officers, public banquets and the like, only these, nothing more than these; then there would arise a little cloud upon the clear blue sky of her faith, and she would say to herself,

"If he should forget."

For she remembered the old stories which she had heard her father and Aunt Hildegarde tell. There was the Lady Berengaria Lyneton, who waited so long for that Crusader knight of hers, but he never came back. And there was the fair Alice, who spent a whole long life of widowhood for the gallant soldier husband, who, she thought, had been killed in the wars of the Roses. And he had never been killed at all, he had been living far away with some beautiful lady, parted only from his faithful wife by a death far sadder than any which sword or spear could give. And there was Gertrude, golden-haired, blue-eyed, the loveliest of all the Lyneton women, who, meeting her betrothed lover after seven years of absence and waiting, met him hers no longer, the love faded, the trust gone. And with just one sad, quiet look, which held in it no rebuke for all the pain he had caused

her, she parted from him, and went her way, after a few weeks of pining sickness, to the rest of her kindred, under the chancel stones of St. Hilda's church.

Gwendoline used to think of these old stories told in many a ballad and romance, by the English troubadours, and she would ask herself, might some such cruel lot be in store for her? Bound in the world's eye by no promise, free to choose, as she herself, but for that last farewell, was free to be chosen, having nothing to hold them to each other but that one little word "trust," a word which for some has such scant meaning, would he keep all that she had given him, or would he not?

Gwendoline Lyneton thought such thoughts as these, when, weary of waiting for those Indian letters, she sat alone in the dormer window, her own room window, whose shadow, at

early morning time, fell upon the east end of St. Hilda's church. She could not help them ; they would come. For truly the waiting had been very long, and there was ever that one little sad thought, stealing up through all the hope, still that one little dark cloud creeping over the heaven of her trust—

“If he should forget.”

Then with a very proud gesture, she would put back the rippling yellow hair from a face somewhat paler now than when, five years ago, Maurice Demeron pressed his farewell kiss upon it. And those grey eyes, which erewhile had had a look of sadness and tenderness within them, would flash beneath their level brows, as she saw, by the sunlight gleaming in through the chancel window, the canopied tombs, under which her ancestors lay ; those ancient knights and ladies who had lived so purely, and loved

so truly, and died so fearlessly. And there would be never another doubt in her heart, nor shadow of change there, as she whispered to herself,

“He trusted me, and when did any trust a Lyneton of Lyneton Abbots, and find that trust betrayed?”

CHAPTER VIII.

“WELL, Mr. Mallinson, I’ve given it a fair consideration, and looked the matter over back and front, and endways and sideways, and every way as it’s best to be looked at, before giving of ourselves to make a start in it; and I’ve settled it can be done, and well done too, and so I think we’d best do it. That’s what I say about it.”

And the spare, somewhat angular, middle-aged woman, who had been subjecting the matter in hand, whatever it might be, to such a severe exhaustive analysis, looked across the table towards her lord and master, to the intent he

should affix to such analysis the sign-warrant of his approval.

But Mr. Mallinson, a sandy-haired, ginger-whiskered man, of forty-eight or fifty, who was discussing hot muffins with business-like rapidity, and in the pauses of that interesting employment marking off with a broad, flat and not delicately clean thumb nail, the rise and fall of the flour markets, as chronicled in the *Mark Lane Express*, did not appear disposed to turn any immediate attention to the subject which his wife had brought before him. He merely gave a grunt of mitigated approval, capable of being assigned with equal propriety to the hot muffins, the state of the flour markets, or the exhaustive analysis.

Mrs. Mallinson, however, knew her husband's little peculiarities, and knew also how to manage them with becoming wifely cleverness. She

had not been married for five-and-twenty years without discovering that Japhet Mallinson, in common with the mighty Cæsar of old, could give his attention, if needful, to more than one thing at a time. And so, appropriating the grunt of approval as directed to her proposal, she went on,

"Yes; I've got it all settled what I mean to have. A gentleman for breakfast and tea. That's what I could get through comfortably, without feeling him lie heavy upon me. And I've had my eye on the papers this two or three weeks past, to see if one could be got reasonable. Only it's rather awkward meeting with one at this season of the year, the time being so far on, and our not caring to have him for dinner, on account of his wanting so much cooking. It's such a business is cooking extra in the middle of the day, and a gentleman too, as

naturally wants more attending to than a lady, if you don't take on an extra girl in the kitchen, which is what I don't mean to at the present. I don't know though, as I should mind having one for dinner on Sunday, when Betsy stays at home to cook. She might as well have him extra as not, and her dawdling half her time away, as I believe and feel convinced she does, when I'm not in the way to give an eye to her. Should you mind having a gentleman for dinner, on Sundays, Mr. Mallinson?"

Mr. Mallinson gave another grunt. Apparently he had no objection to this pleasing little diversity in their bill of fare, seeing that the cooking could be done without additional trouble. But from the manner in which his wife looked at him when she made the suggestion, it was easy to infer that if he had manifested any conscientious scruples with regard to this bold inno-

vation upon the customs of Christian Oresbridge, they would have counted for very little. Mrs. Mallinson had set her mind upon a gentleman for the above purposes, and a gentleman she was determined to have, if he could be met with at a reasonable price.

"No, I didn't suppose you'd be anything but agreeable to it, inconvenienced as you wouldn't be with the cooking. And then," continued she, giving an unexpectedly civilised turn to the hitherto somewhat cannibalistic tendency of the conversation, "it would be something useful into the house-keeping money. Them two rooms over the shop, coals, gas and waiting, with breakfast took up for him of a morning, and his tea when he comes home of an evening, for a guinea a week, wouldn't be amiss, as the markets is; and that's as little as we can do it for, to make it pay, and servants' wages what

they are, to say nothing of house-rent, and I don't believe there's another place in England so shameful for rent as this genteel end of Oresbridge. A guinea a week, shall that be it, Mr. Mallinson?"

A third grunt, which Mrs. Mallinson took to intimate that that should be it.

"Not as I'm partial to a lodger, Mr. Mallinson, by any means, for I always said they was a troublesome thing to do with in a house, unless it was a single gentleman like the present instance, and took up with business in the middle of the day, so as to leave the house free in a manner while you've got through the thick of the work. And even then, it isn't what I ever had much of a fancy for, only there's calls upon us now, Mr. Mallinson, as there didn't used to be before we left the old congregation. People look up to us to be burning and shining

lights where we are now, and it's an expensive thing being a burning and a shining light, where a cause isn't as you may say fairly started and able to run alone. But he wouldn't take much out of our pockets, wouldn't a gentleman for breakfast and tea, while the markets keeps steady, and they're steady now, aren't they, Mr. Mallinson ? ”

Mr. Mallinson signified with a fourth grunt that the markets *were* steady, and Mrs. Mallinson, who had a more brilliant gift in conversation than her husband, went on—

“ Besides, being particular as he is to this end of Oresbridge, on account of its being near to Lynton Abbots, and him having there to go once a week, if we didn't have him Mrs. Green would. She's been as keen as mustard after having a gentleman to board with her ever since Mary Green comed home from school ; and

I'd take him myself, if it was for nothing else but that he shouldn't go to her, for she's been that mean in our direction, has Mrs. Green, ever since we left the old congregation, as it's more than a professing christian has a right to be, and she ought to be let feel it, and she shall too, for I know she's been looking out for a boarder ever since the time of the split."

"And why is the young man partic'lar to this end of Oresbridge?" asked Mr. Mallinson, who, having finished his muffins and reached the bottom of the market list, was now in a position to enter more fully into the merits of the case.

"For convenience sake, Mr. Mallinson, as I mentioned to you before, only your mind's always so set upon them markets. He's got a situation in one of the iron works about here; it don't occupy him only until noon of a Saturday, because of the men giving over work sooner then, and so the

rest part of the day Mr. Lyneton of the Lyneton Abbots has engaged him to look over his accounts, and mend up the estate a bit. And time somebody did mend it up, for if what folks says is true, it won't hold the roof together over their heads much longer."

"Ay. It's poor paying land is Lyneton Abbots," remarked Mr. Mallinson, settling himself back in the leather-covered arm-chair by the fire, with the satisfied air of a man who knows that the world is going well with him—"poor land, and over-much saddled with game. Not but what he might make a good penny out of that, though, if he was to have it brought up to Oresbridge shops and sold, which he's over-proud to do by all accounts, just as if hares and them sort of things wasn't made to fetch money. Why, if that there land was mine, I should make two or three hundred a year by nothing else but selling the game at a

vallyation to some one as would shoot it off. But Mr. Lyneton's the poorest hand at turning a penny as ever I heard tell of, and always was ; and if somebody don't look sharp for him, there'll be a wind-up there before long."

"And serve them right too," replied his wife. "There's a stop wanted putting to their pride this good while past. Sold up maybe, and go to a smaller house, and the sensiblest thing they could do, if only they'd brought their minds to it when the second Mrs. Lyneton was took, and there didn't want so much appearance keeping up. Of course when the female head of a family's took, and there isn't no grown-up daughters to put forward in the world, as there wasn't when the last Mrs. Lyneton died, appearances doesn't want keeping up ; and there was no need for a carriage nor nougnt of that sort, and a man to wait, as always costs ten times more than

he's worth. But it's a senseless thing is pride. Pride's the senselessest thing ever was."

And Mrs. Mallinson sniffed. She had a very peculiar way of sniffing, quite independent of cold in the head, or local irritation, or anything of that sort. It was just her way of putting a finishing touch to the expression of her sentiments. And a very vigorous finishing touch too, for it drew her face to one side in a slightly upward direction and her shoulder after it, and was generally accompanied by a defiant toss of her head. That sniff was Mrs. Mallinson's characteristic. She always made use of it when she had said anything conclusive, just as some people give themselves a general shake, or bring down their open palms upon the table, or indulge in a brisk series of coughs and jerks, when they have come to the end of an argument. Mrs. Mallinson used to sniff in that way at

chapel too, when the minister said anything which met her views in an unusually satisfactory manner. Her nose and mouth would give a twitch on one side, her right shoulder would be upheaved, and then came a sonorous inhalation, audible to the utmost corner of the place, and which said as plainly as any words could have spoken—

“Excellent, Mr. Barton; just the very thing I should have said myself.”

And this was a sniff of unusual decision; for if there was one thing more than another which drew forth Mrs. Mallinson’s animadversions to their bitterest extent, it was pride, such pride as Mr. Lyneton of Lyneton Abbots showed when he declined turning himself into a licensed game-dealer.

“It’s the senselessest thing ever was, is pride, and I’m thankful to say it never crept into my

family, because it's a curse wherever it comes, to say nought of its being agen' the Scripters, waich don't vally a party for good descent nor nought of that sort, but only because they put out their best endeavours to do their duty and ge: on in the world, and give proper support to the body as they're connected with. Which I've alvays done and always mean to do, and nobody shall have it to say against you and me, Mr. Mallinson, that we don't hold up the new body is it ought to be held up, and give it a helping hand with tea-meetings and subscriptions and being willing to take the chair and everything as a professing Christian ought to feel it on their consciences to do, as a privilege for the cause."

Mr. Mallinson said nothing, but chinked the half-crowns in his pocket with an abstracted and not radiant expression of countenance.

Apparently the giving of subscriptions to the new body was a somewhat dubious privilege, to say the least of it, though one of which he was frequently called upon to avail himself. And to be a burning and a shining light was indeed, as Mrs. Mallinson had before expressed it, very expensive. He thought sometimes that the position of a dip candle, if not so honourable, would be more in accordance with his private sentiments. But Mrs. Mallinson had no notion of her husband becoming a dip candle, whereby expenditure of sundry five-pound notes he might shine in the new body as a superfine composite.

"Yes, it's a privilege for the cause, as I always say when they come to you to take the chair, and it can't be done under a guinea at the collection, being a public situation, and every one seeing what's put upon the plate. But it's the interests

of the cause has been given us to look to, and it'll go ill against us both, in spirituals and temporals too, which it's all our duties to look to, if we don't keep ourselves up to the mark and show an example to our enemies in the old body, as are always on their watch-tower seeking occasions of offence against us, mean-spirited things as they are, and everything in their own hands as they want to have, and no regard to the rights of the people. I haven't patience with 'em. And I always feel it laid upon me as my duty to say as much to Mrs. Green, who sticks to the old body on account of their supporting the business. Not as I wish anything, I'm sure, but speaking the truth in love, and lifting up my voice against oppression, as it's the duty of every professing person to do, and as you and me, Mr. Mallinson——"

How far this exposition of the whole duty of professing persons might have extended, is uncertain. Most likely to some considerable length, as Mrs. Mallinson prided herself upon a gift in “profitable conversation,” meaning thereby conversation of a so-called religious tendency, and was wont to exercise it freely when occasion offered. But just then a boy’s voice sounded through the green curtained glass door which separated the sitting-room from the provision establishment.

“Shop!”

Mr. Mallinson sprang up as if electrified, pushed away his cup and saucer, and hurried to his station behind the counter, leaving Mrs. Mallinson to conclude her oration to his empty chair.

Apparently her thoughts drifted back again in progress of time to the exhaustive analysis

with which the conversation had commenced; for after a season of silent meditation, she sniffed decisively, and said to herself in a brisk business-like sort of tone,

“A guinea a week, and his tea and breakfast took up to him. That’s what I’ve made up my mind to take him in for, and reasonable too.”

CHAPTER IX.

MR. JAPHET MALLINSON, baker and flour-dealer, lived in one of the more genteel business streets at the west end of Oresbridge, midway between the chimneys, warehouses, gin-palaces, dens, cellars, and alleys of the town proper, and those “elegant villa residences and desirable family mansions,” as the advertisements called them, which were dotted at irregular intervals along the road between Oresbridge and Lyneton Abbots.

Indeed the neighbourhood, towards its western extremity, was so very genteel, that Mrs. Mallinson, who was a woman of advanced notions, greatly objected to her husband’s place of busi-

ness being denominated a shop, and had several times suggested to him the advisability of describing it in his circulars and advertisements as a “Wholesale and Retail Provision Establishment.” Nay more, her ambition had of late taken a loftier flight, and on the strength of a few tins of fancy biscuits and a jar or two of pickles which had made their appearance in the front shop, she would fain have induced her husband to exchange for the words “Italian Warehouseman,” that exceedingly vulgar “Japhet Mallinson, baker and flour-dealer,” which at present figured in conspicuous yellow letters above the worthy little man’s stock of cerealian produce.

Such a change, she said, would push the business in an aristocratic direction, besides giving the establishment an air of superiority over the other provision-shops farther down the street.

For the purse-proud merchants' wives and daughters, who would scarcely so much as descend to put their dainty feet upon a flour-dealer's door step, or suffer their salmon-coloured kids to touch his dusty counter, would not think it at all beneath them to draw up their carriages in front of an Italian warehouse, and order fancy biscuits to an indefinite extent therefrom. And a carriage gave such a finish to a place of business. Mrs. Mallinson must confess that if there was one thing more than another which caused her breast to swell with satisfaction—not to say pride, that being a thing she never indulged in—it was when a carriage drew up at Canton House and Mr. Mallinson came out to receive orders. More especially did it rejoice her if any of the members of the old body happened to be passing at the time; or if Mrs. Green, the pale-faced widow who kept a

concern somewhat similar to their own, only of course on a very much smaller scale, further down the common end of the street, happened to be standing at her shop door, looking out for customers. For Mrs. Green, poor thing ! never had such a thing as a carriage standing in front of her pitiful little display of tea cakes and threepenny loaves ; and though she did keep herself so very silent, and thought nobody good enough to associate with that slim, meek-looking daughter of hers, just home from school, yet everyone knew it was all she could do to be ready for rent-day, and keep a little cash in hand, so as to be able to pay the travellers when they came round for orders. Mrs. Mallinson *did* like Mrs. Green to be standing somewhere in sight when a carriage came up to Canton House. It was such a triumph, besides letting the widow see that the new body had someone belonging

to it who could hold up its respectability, and keep it on its feet, as she might say, equal to anything the Park Street congregation had been able to do amongst themselves.

But Mr. Mallinson was a wide-awake little man, not, as he expressed it, to be caught with chaff. And though he respected Mrs. Mallinson as a remarkably capable, energetic woman, thrifty, prudent, far-seeing, the very woman, in fact, that a man ought to have at his side if he meant to get along in the world, still her judgment was not infallible, especially where there was a chance of getting a little rise in a social point of view. She was a trifle high in her notions was Mrs. Mallinson, if he might venture to hint anything against such an admirable wife as she had been to him for nearly thirty years; very fond of getting genteel custom to the shop, even though they had to wait years for the

payment of the bills, as was generally the case with those great people. And always aspiring to push the business in a fancy line, instead of keeping to the flour sacks and meal tubs which had served them so well in years past. An Italian warehouse might be a very fine thing in its way, but a downright, straightforward bread and flour shop was much more productive. Mr. Mallinson knew whence the greater part of the money came that chinked so pleasantly in his till from morning to night. Not from the carriage people who took such long credit and wanted so much waiting upon and humouring, and always had so much fault to find if the quality of the goods supplied was not of the best and choicest; but from the lower classes, respectable, well-to-do mechanics' and journeymen's wives, who lived in neat little rows of ten-pound houses at the east end of the street, and who

would never have dreamed of going to an Italian warehouse for the sixpenny-worth of cheese, or the half pound of bacon, or the three-penny twist, which after all brought in a better percentage, being always sold for ready money, than the large orders, involving as they did such long credit, which came from the great people on the Lyneton Abbots road.

So the obnoxious “Japhet Mallinson, baker and flour-dealer,” still figured in conspicuous yellow letters over the loaves and biscuits and sample cases of different prized flours, and the only concession which the judicious tradesman made to his wife’s aristocratic prejudices was to have the words “Italian Warehouse” printed on the biscuit bags, for the benefit of the great folks, who might nibble their ratafias and macaroons with a supremo relish when they could trace the pedigree of the same to a less ques-

tionable source than a common-place baker's shop.

Mr. Mallinson was a very active man ; active in business, in politics, in religion, in everything which he took up. Very matter of fact too, with an admirable talent for getting on in the world. He had begun life, as most young men begin it, with a fine store of visions and aspirations. When his father bound him to Mr. Penny, the provision-dealer of Dalston Rise, he was dimly conscious of longings after the infinite. He felt within him the stirrings of a soul which scorned the low restraints of trade. He entered upon his apprenticeship with a heroic resolve to live exclusively in the top story of his nature. Wealth, it was the curse of noble souls ; ease, it was the grave of lofty endeavour ; the world in general—so Mr. Mallinson stated in several sonnets composed for the *Dalston Chronicle*, but

never published—was one great charnel house of blighted hopes and murdered aspirations. Give him a cottage in some lonely sequestered dell; give him the twin soul which Fate had destined to share his joys and sorrows, and then the busy stream of life might surge on at its own wild will. He was not born to battle with it—he had hopes and aims and longings far beyond it, and superior to it.

These were Mr. Mallinson's private aspirations as he weighed out pounds of bacon and cheese behind the counter of old Mr. Penny's shop, at the lower end of Dalston Rise. Of course they came to nothing. They were very pleasant in their way, as a sort of scenic background to the otherwise painfully earthly surroundings of his life there; but they did not do to get a living with, and so little by little he let them slip away—which was perhaps, under the circum-

stances, the best thing for them to do. By the time he was out of his apprenticeship, he had given over writing sonnets, and instead betook himself to the learning of book-keeping by double entry. He also ceased to dream of sylphs with golden hair and languishing eyes, and surrendered himself to the attraction of Matilda Penny, his master's daughter, a stout, robust, large-boned damsel of one and twenty, whose hair was anything but golden, and whose eyes had a decided cast in them. But she was a capital business woman, as good as half a dozen ordinary men for looking after things, and not letting the grass grow under her feet. And instead of taking her to live in an arbour of woodbine and honeysuckle in some lone, sequestered glade, which indeed would have been a most unsuitable residence for a person of her active domestic habits, he brought her

to the prosperous manufacturing town of Oresbridge, and there set up in business for himself as a baker and flour-dealer, in which honourable calling he perhaps achieved as much usefulness as though he had given vent to his aspirations and spent his life in writing sonnets for the *Dalston Chronicle*.

He was a man very much respected in Oresbridge, and a useful little man in his way. He had a great gift for rooting out public abuses and holding them up for inspection; getting them righted if he could, but if not, still making a wonderful fuss and commotion over them. A great reviler of Government extortions, and taxes, and church-rates, and all that sort of thing, which—at any rate the church-rates and the extortion—might be done away with if only the people would rise to a sense of their importance, and give their voice

in the ruling of the nation as Englishmen had a right to give it. He had no notion of people lying down to be trampled upon; of vestry meetings levying church-rates, and submissive householders paying them without protest or opposition; of government imposing extra duties on this, that, and the other article, and expecting the masses to pay it without so much as a murmur or a question. All that sort of thing, as Mr. Mallinson used to say, was what he had no patience with. He was a friend of the people, a stanch voter on the Liberal side, a stickler for rights and immunities of every kind, so far as they could be got.

A pushing man too. Already he had elbow-ed his way into the town-council. By-and-by he hoped to become an Alderman; and when that dignity was once gained, what hindered that he should sit in the chair of supreme civic

authority, and envelop that square-built little person of his in the coveted insignia of mayoralty itself? An ultimatum beyond which even Mrs. Mallinson's proudest thoughts could not aspire.

For many years Mr. Mallinson had been a very stirring man in the Park Street congregation, one of the largest, most prosperous and flourishing dissenting congregations in Oresbridge; great in committee meetings and vestry meetings, and public opportunities of all kinds. Active there, too, in rooting out abuses, and crying down an over-rigid discipline, and resisting the claims of those who sought to maintain authority over him. Insomuch, that when a latent spirit of discontent, which had for some time been smouldering amongst the more turbulent members of Park Street, broke forth, a year or two before this time, into open rebellion,

Mr. Mallinson, true to his colours, joined the opposition side in church politics, and hoisted the standard of rebellion to such purpose, that he was the means of organising a split in the congregation, and carrying away two or three hundred of its members; who, placing him at their head, renounced their allegiance to Park Street discipline, laws, and all other restrictions whatsoever, and had now established themselves as a separate body, having a chapel and supporting a minister on their own account.

That was a proud day for Mr. Mallinson, when, after much previous muttered wrath and secret council taking with others of his disaffected fellow-members, he made a formal renunciation of his connection with the old chapel, and, as the phrase was, "went off with the split." Mr. Mallinson got then what he had been seeking so long—place and power. In the Park Street con-

gregation, with its well-compacted system, its carefully digested code of discipline and laws, which were steadily enforced, in spite of little private sputterings of discontent; with its ranks of intelligent members and its well-trained, energetic minister, Mr. Mallinson was a mere unit, a quite insignificant person, that could easily be spared, that would never be missed. The old cause would go on just the same, and do its work and fight its battles and win its victories quite as well without him as it had ever done with him.

Not so the new cause. Mr. Mallinson was supreme there. He was head, backbone, and feet to this young prodigy, which had sprung forth, Minerva-like, fully armed from the brain of the paternal Jove. He was acknowledged champion of the “split” in Oresbridge, supreme authority in all the committees, vestry meetings,

argumentations and disputations of the youthful sect; a veritable primate, nay even more—a sovereign; for was he not head of church and state, too?—holder of the purse strings, as well as guardian of the religious interests of his fellow-malcontents?

Mr. Mallinson liked that. He was fond of supremacy. It pleased him to be deferred to and looked up to. It was a glorious thing to say, as he sat at the head of one “split” committee after another, “This motion shall be carried, this other motion shall not be carried.” “This minister shall be invited, that shall be rejected.” Better such a position, very much better, than sitting amongst the unnoticed many of the old congregation, and having to bend to its discipline and be lost amongst its multitudes, and only have his social status recognised at all when called upon to pay his part towards the

support of ministers who acknowledged no right of his to assume authority over their ways and doings. The “split” had placed Mr. Mallinson on a wonderful elevation. Standing there, he rubbed his hands and drew himself up with dignity, and shook that fiery-locked little head of his, and said to the assembled congregation of Grosmont Road,

“See what a great man am I!”

But it was expensive. That was the worst of it, very expensive. And business was rather flat just now, in consequence of a temporary depression in the iron trade, which always told perceptibly upon the middle-class population of Oresbridge. Mr. Mallinson’s till had not overflowed with its accustomed liberality for the last few months, so many of the mechanics, and artisans, and iron-workers, whose wives brought their contributions there

in times past, having left the neighbourhood to seek employment elsewhere. But the infant cause, which was scarcely of age to stand alone yet, had to be nursed and reared to something like maturity with great expense of bazaars, and tea meetings, and other public gatherings,—at all of which “our highly respected founder and supporter,” as the more private members called Mr. Mallinson, was expected to come forward with guineas and five-pound notes, to say nothing of performing the rites of hospitality to ministers from distant places, who had sympathies with the belligerents, and so came to aid them in resisting what they had represented as an unwarrantable act of tyranny.

Mrs. Mallinson had said truly enough that it was an expensive thing being burning and shining lights, as she and her husband were ex-

pected to be in the new body. Her religion cost them uncommon dear, she used to say, ever since the split took place in Park Street; and if it had not been for that meek-faced widow Mrs. Green, across the road a little further down, who was always on the watch for "returning prodigals," as she called them, coming back to the old home; and if it had not been for the office-bearers and the minister of the parent congregation, who would be sure to say with a pitying air of paternal superiority, "We told you so; you see you had very much better have staid with us from the beginning," Mrs. Mallinson scarcely knew sometimes whether she could not almost bring her mind to go back to her old place amongst the worshippers in Park Street, where the collections only came once a fortnight, and the minister was not always sending across for instalments of his

stipend from Mr. Mallinson's private purse.

That was why she had made up her mind to have a gentleman for breakfast and tea. It would not involve much difference in actual outlay, and the extra guinea a week would help to repair the ravages which the voracious appetite of the juvenile cause was continually making on Mr. Mallinson's resources.

Besides, if the gentleman in question happened to be a person of good prospects and tolerable means—and a situation in an extensive concern like the Bellona iron-works was a fine opening for a young man, if he only had energy enough to make the most of his opportunities; there were plenty of men about Oresbridge now, living in almost princely mansions, and counting their gains by hundreds of thousands, who had begun life with a clerkship in an iron-work, and then

gradually worked their way up to a share in the concern, and finally become senior partner,—if then this expected lodger turned out to be of tolerable means and fair prospects, there was no telling what the results might be for Sarah Matilda.

She was quite old enough now to begin to think about such things, and Mrs. Mallinson could not deny that it would be a great satisfaction to her own mind to have the dear girl comfortably established, and in a promising track for future well-doing; such a track as a prospective senior partnership in an extensive concern like the Bellona iron-works, would be likely to open out. Not that Mrs. Mallinson looked at such things in a worldly point of view, she was thankful to say she had always cultivated a frame of mind quite above that sort of thing, and it was her opinion that professing

people ought to set their affections on more enduring objects than fair temporal prospects and promising means. But people must live, whether they made a profession or not, and if they had a sufficiency to support the cause handsomely and put something by every year, it was a blessing for which they ought to be thankful, and which they ought to put forth their best efforts to obtain. And she must say she should like to see dear Sarah Matilda comfortably settled, if it was only to disappoint Mrs. Green, who was always bringing forward that daughter of hers and praising up her home training and domestic virtues, as much as to infer that Sarah Matilda had not been brought up to know everything that was proper in a house in addition to her music and French, which they had paid so much for when they sent her to finish off at

Miss Veneering's fashionable boarding-school.

But some people were so jealous. That was just where it was. Some people were so jealous. They couldn't bear to see any one else's girls better dressed, or better looking, or better finished off than their own. Pride, nothing but pride, and pride was the senselessest thing in the world. There was nothing in the world so senseless as pride.

And then Mrs. Mallinson gave a vehement sniff, which sent her face all on one side, and set off upstairs to make arrangements for the new lodger.

CHAPTER X.

THE hansom cab, a shabby-looking vehicle, by no means calculated to make Mrs. Mallinson's heart swell with satisfaction, even if pale-faced widow Green should chance to see it from behind her coffee canisters, had driven away from Canton House, and the luggage had all been taken upstairs and deposited in a small bed-room to the front.

No very great all, either, as Mrs. Mallinson and Sarah Matilda remarked to each other when it had been duly turned over and examined, and put into its proper place. A middle-sized portmanteau, with sundry dints and hollows in its battered surface, hinting of corresponding

scantiness within. That portmanteau might have held twice as many things had its owner been fortunate enough to have possessed them. If Mr. Deeping's purse was not better filled and his prospects more promising than that lean and cavernous portmanteau, Sarah Matilda would do well to turn her thoughts in another direction, for certainly it gave but little indication of a senior partnership within any reasonable time.

Besides the portmanteau there was a little travelling bag and a very small square box, which, judging from its weight, might be filled with books. Also an umbrella, evidently bought new for the young man to come from home with, for the ticket had not yet been taken from it. Only alpaca though, Mrs. Mallinson noticed, as she pulled it half way out of the case; no daintily-carved ivory handle or engraved silver-plate,

nothing but a wooden stick with a hook to it; such an umbrella as might be bought for seven-and-sixpence at any second-rate outfitter's shop in Oresbridge.

Mrs. Mallinson sniffed. Not a sniff of approval this time however, and set the unfortunate umbrella down in the corner with a thump, wondering whether, for all other intents and purposes save the weekly guinea, Mr. Deeping might not as well have gone to Mrs. Green, the pale-faced widow over the way, who had been wanting a gentleman for breakfast and tea this last six months past.

"Maybe there's more to come, though," she said. "I shouldn't wonder if he's waiting to see if the situation suits before he has all his things brought. I never blame folks for being cautious, and looking where they're going to put their feet. Come along, Sarah Matilda, and get to

your practising. It'll be as well for Mr. Deeping to know you've got a taste for music."

Sarah Matilda went her way like a dutiful daughter, and was soon at the piano in the back parlour, warbling "Ever of Thee," whose dulcet strains, mingling with the odour of newly-ground coffee and the musty fragrance of smoked hams, floated up to the little sitting-room where Mr. Deeping was spending his first evening of Oresbridge life.

It was a showily furnished room, everything in it very cheap and new, having been purchased with a view to lodgers. Mrs. Mallinson generally had a lady or gentleman at the county and race balls; and when there happened to be a festival or a great gathering of any kind in the place, she was not averse to making a few pounds by letting the drawing-room and best bed-room, though until now she had never had

a regular lodger “week in and week out,” as she expressed it.

There was no lack of adornment, such as it was. Some scratchy crayon landscapes in gilt frames, with Sarah Matilda’s name conspicuously placed in the corner, hung upon the vividly papered walls. There was a marvellous collection of wax fruit, done by Sarah Matilda, under a glass shade on the centre table. There were mats and screens and tidies and cushions and fancy baskets and anti-macassars of all conceivable shapes and colours, also done by Sarah Matilda, whose gift in this department was fully equal to that of her mother in practical exposition. And over the fire-place was a three-quarter’s length portrait of the young lady herself, in her best dress and drop earrings, supported on each side by her “Pa” and “Ma,” in their best apparel too, Mrs. Mallinson having a bristling

green silk that stuck about in very unmanageable folds, and Mr. Mallinson a resplendent suit of black, unpleasantly tight about the arms; the same suit which he had new upon the occasion of his taking the chair at the last public meeting of the split.

The new lodger took notice of all these things as he sat by the fire in a very slippery easy-chair, which creaked with every movement of its restless occupant. There were no intellectual resources in the room, except a few smartly-bound annuals, birthday presents or school prizes to Sarah Matilda, containing the usual modicum of elegant extracts and sentimental sketches; and so after looking through these, and examining the crayon drawings and making a general survey of the interior arrangements of his new quarters, Hugh Deeping turned his attention to the prospect outside.

That was scarcely more inviting. Grosmont Road was not a much frequented thoroughfare, except at certain times of the day, when the merchants who lived further down towards Lynton Abbots went to and from their respective places of business. Now, late in the evening, scarcely anyone was stirring. A few mechanics' wives, with baskets on their arms and one or two children dragging at their gowns behind, were doing their shopping for the morrow ; and some loose workmen, pitmen, puddlers and others, of whom there was always a supply in the Oresbridge streets, were sauntering about with their hands in their pockets, looking in at the shop windows, or making remarks, not always complimentary, to the passers-by. There was a gin palace a little higher up the street, out of which, though it was considered an unusually well-conducted house, a drunken man rolled now

and then, and staggered to the nearest lamp-post, embracing it affectionately, to the amusement of those of his companions not so far over-powered as himself, who were loitering about. Sometimes the performer was a woman, and then great were the shouts of merriment, rude and coarse were the gibes which were flung at her from pitmen and mechanics, who forgot that they had ever been tended by a mother's care or known a sister's gentle kindness.

Just opposite Mr. Mallinson's establishment, the green and crimson jars of a chemist's shop flashed their light upon the pavement, and next to that a pastry cook's window displayed rows of penny pies, and dingy-looking bride-cakes under dirty glasses, and boxes full of Arabian delight at a halfpenny a square. And a little lower down, past a milliner's shop and an outfitting

warehouse, Mrs. Green's coffee canisters glimmered in the gas-light. Poor Mrs. Green, who would have been so thankful for a gentleman to board with her, who had such trouble to make her rent and meet her payments and keep that thin delicate girl of hers comfortably at home, instead of sending her out as shopwoman, as everybody said she ought to be sent.

That was about all, yet for want of more interesting occupation, Hugh Deeping lingered at the window half hour after half hour, watching the scant stream of life go murmuring past. But he had never lived in a street before, and all its sights and sounds were alike unfamiliar to him. It was like turning over the pages of a new book, to watch even the very commonplace things and people which could be seen from the windows over Mr. Mallinson's shop. Sometimes a smart young dressmaker hurried along to her

home in one of the quiet little terraces behind Grosmont Road, not unconscious of her pretty face or the admiring glances which were cast upon her as she tripped along with such light, careless step ; or some ragged urchins clustered round the pastry-cook's shop with great exclamations of wonder and delight, or a street organist would set up his dismal wail until ordered by the policeman to move on. And once a haggard, hollow-eyed woman, with two or three children in suspiciously clean pinafores, placed herself in front of the kerb-stone and droned out a melancholy ditty, contrasting strangely enough, and, but for the woman's weary look, ludicrously too, with the dulcet love-strains which Sarah Matilda still kept pouring forth from the back parlour.

He was listening to the poor creature, who perhaps years ago had a pleasant home in some

far-off village, and had climbed on a father's knee for good-night kisses, when two men came past, carrying a coffin between them, whistling as they went, stopping now and then to change it from shoulder to shoulder. They were jolly, good-natured looking men. It mattered little to them how sadly their knock should echo by-and-by in some darkened home, nor with what aching hearts some stricken husband or wife would listen to their heavy foot-fall on the stair as they took that coffin up into the death chamber, and lifted the poor wasted form into it, and screwed the silver-tired lid tightly down over a face on which no more unavailing tears would ever fall. They had carried home many a coffin in their time, and they expected to carry many another before that month was out. For Autumn was always a busy time for the Oresbridge undertakers ; people used to die so fast of small-pox

and fevers in the cellars and garrets of its over-crowded courts as soon as the fogs set in. And then the miasma which bred in these same over-crowded, ill-drained courts, crept silently forth and found its way ere long to the stately mansions and elegant villas, exacting from them its pitiless toll of death and mourning.

A common sight, a very common sight, but it made Hugh Deeping shudder and turn aside. Just so carelessly three months ago, two other men had carried another coffin, his father's coffin, to that darkened room away up in the pleasant lake country. Carried it there on no such dreary evening as this, but in the merry July time, when birds were singing and flowers blooming and leaves fluttering in the sunshine, and when if his mother could have wiped her tear-dimmed eyes, she might have looked out past many a wooded hill and purling stream, to the little

Congregational chapel, where her husband whose coffin they were just bringing home, had preached for the last twenty years.

CHAPTER XI.

HUGH DEEPING bowed his head upon his hands, there in Mrs. Mallinson's showy drawing-room, amongst Sarah Matilda's pictures and fancy-work, and thought very bitterly of the past three months which had wrought such a change in his life, snatching away all its hope and promise, and binding him down to a future in which he must toil through the dreary mechanical routine of task work, mere counting-house drudgery and book-keeping, instead of treading in his father's steps, and some day winning for himself, perhaps, a name of which that father might be proud.

For the elder Mr. Deeping, though but a

poorly paid minister, and having very injudiciously—so his friends said—entangled himself and damaged his prospects for life by marrying a wife with no fortune but her sweet face and pleasant temper, was an ambitious man, and would fain have had his only son stand high in that honourable calling of which he was only a humble member. So Hugh was thoroughly well trained at a good school in the town where his father preached, and when they found that he was a bright intelligent lad, earnest too, and of steady purpose, they took the little store which had been carefully gathered up as a provision for old age, and spent it in sending him to college, intending that when his divinity course was over, he should go to Germany to study for a year or two, and then come home to take up his father's work.

It was a hard pull for them. Many a scant

meal and thread-bare dress did those college years of Hugh Deeping's cost. Many a weary hour did his father spend, toiling over magazine articles or extra sermons whose scant pay might help to furnish books for the young student. Many a pleasant excursion was put aside, many a day's pleasure denied, that the money might go towards Hugh's college expenses, or those years of study in Germany which were to come afterwards. But they knew all would be right in the end. The lad was working on bravely and steadily, winning for himself a good reputation for talent and learning amongst the professors. He would make a right noble man some day, and when he had achieved name and fame, and a good standing place in the church, they would not need to repent these years of hardship and self-denial.

So Hugh toiled on at college, full of hope

and purpose, cheered through all his hard study by thoughts of the quickly coming future, in which he would be able to pay back all that had been so dearly bought for him. For when once he came back from Germany with the wisdom and experience which those two years at Tübingen would give him, it would be so easy to make his way, and he would work so hard and spare no pains if only the world might be better for his living in it, and if only he might do something that might make his father proud of him.

But Hugh had only been at college half the divinity course when death came to that quiet home up in the lake country. The strong man was smitten down and the bread winner taken away. Then followed great lamentations amongst the people, who for so many years had listened to his words of teaching. And addresses of condolence were sent to the bereaved widow,

with eulogiums on the deceased pastor—praises of his wisdom, his talent, his self-denying zeal, his unwearied efforts for the benefit of his charge. Which addresses of condolence were followed, after a reasonable interval, by the choice of another pastor, because the church would suffer loss if left uncared for more than a few weeks. And then Mrs. Deeping had to leave the quiet little lake town and go forth to seek a home amongst strangers, carrying with her the best wishes of her husband's people; they should always remember her in their prayers, they said, and think of her with respect and affection; but carrying with her, alas! a very scant store of that which is even more needful than good wishes and kind remembrances in this hard, matter-of-fact world, where the most pitiful of tradesmen must needs send their bills in once a year at least, and the tenderest-hearted landlords must

have their rent punctually paid, or be under the painful necessity of getting it in other ways.

Mrs. Deeping went to Jersey with her son and daughter. Perhaps Mary Deeping might get employment in teaching amongst some of the upper-class families of the island, to whom her ladylike deportment and gentle speech would recommend her, even though she lacked the qualifications for a first-class governesss

And for Hugh? Ah! there were no more terms at College now, no more poring over Greek and Latin authors, or trying of his budding genius in debates and orations amongst his fellow-students. No years of study at Tübingen either, to be followed by a joyous home-coming and an honourable place amongst the ministers of his father's church. In quite another way than that must Hugh Deeping win his daily bread now. And as for name, fame, noble

standing place and other youthful visions which had once flitted before him in a not far distant future, he must turn away from them; they were his no longer, never could be his now. To earn as much money as would keep the wolf from the door, this and not a fine literary reputation must be Hugh Deeping's care henceforth.

He had to leave college. His uncle, a well-to-do haberdasher in London, declined providing the means to keep him there. If his parents had consulted him before sending the youth to any such place, he should most decidedly have given his voice against the scheme. The ministry was a poor thing for getting a man on in the world, a very poor thing. If a young man did not happen to have influential friends in the denomination to which he belonged, he might be idling about for years before he earned as much as would find him bread and cheese, to say nothing

of getting himself comfortably established in life. Hugh had had a good education, his uncle said, and now he must make the best of it. A lad with a good education could do almost anything, if only he gave his mind to it, and did not hamper himself with foolish notions about caste and respectability and intellectual advantages, and all that sort of thing.

And just at that time an acquaintance of this sensible haberdasher uncle's, senior partner in some extensive iron-works in Oresbridge, being in want of a young man as counting-house clerk, Mr. Giles Deeping recommended his nephew to the situation, and succeeded in procuring it for him. A providential opening, Mr. Deeping said, such a one as Hugh might have waited for years and years. There was nothing like iron for getting a youth on in the world. Iron had been the making of many a man who had start-

ed in it with far worse prospects than Hugh. After all, it might be a blessing in disguise that the Rev. Mr. Deeping had been taken off so suddenly, and thereby his son had been compelled to abandon a profession which, though honourable enough in its way, was, to say the least of it, precarious, very precarious; not nearly so much to be depended upon as iron, in a worldly point of view. Mr. Sparkes would give twenty pounds salary for the first quarter, with promise of an increase if the new clerk gave satisfaction. That was more than most young men got in their first situation, but Mr. Sparkes always looked favourably upon ministers' sons, because the steady habits which they generally had were of marketable value in a large concern like the Bellona iron-works.

Steadiness and integrity in a young man who had to do with the monetary affairs of a large

concern like that were worth almost anything, and Mr. Sparkes always made an allowance in consideration of them. Hugh had the ball at his foot now, he had only to go on and prosper.

Which encouraging reflections, or others to the same effect, Mr. Giles Deeping expressed in a letter to his nephew. And then, with a few admirable exhortations, and a five-pound note, he left Hugh to Providence and his own endeavours.

Eighty pounds a year, with board, lodging, and clothing to be provided out of the same, to say nothing of the remittance which, cost what screwing and pinching it might, Hugh determined to send quarterly to his mother and sister. It was scarcely to be called a munificent salary, and the young man might be excused for not breaking forth

into abundant thanksgiving when his uncle's letter arrived. However, he must take it and make the best of it, nothing more suitable being likely to fall in his way at present.

At first Hugh thought of employing his spare Saturday afternoons in private teaching, for he was already pretty well up in classics and mathematics; but happening to see Mr. Lyneton's advertisement in a London paper, his mother persuaded him to try for that situation. He did so, and was successful, greatly to Mrs. Deeping's satisfaction. It would take him out into the country, she thought, and would give him a little open-air exercise at least once a week, which, after being confined all the rest of his time in that close counting-house at the Bellona iron-works, would be so much more healthy for him than indoor teaching.

Also—for the little woman was herself somewhat ambitious, and had searched into the social status of the Lyneton Abbots family—it would bring him into the society of upper-class people, and perhaps do something towards getting him on in the world. A little upper-class society was such an improving thing for a young man, especially if his previous training and associations had qualified him to avail himself of its advantages. And certainly, though his mother said it herself, no one need look down upon her son Hugh; for though his worldly prospects had been so unfortunately overclouded, and that social position which he once hoped to have filled, removed out of his reach, still he himself remained the same, proudly equal in mental cultivation and refinement to the requirements of the most select society, worthy not only to

be tolerated, but even prized, by anyone who could appreciate intellectual worth.

Already, in imagination, she beheld him domesticated with the good people of Lyneton Abbots, who, doubtless, when they learned his previous history and expectations, would hold out to him the right hand of friendship, and welcome him into their home circle, not more for kindness than for the advantage which even they might gain from such pleasant companionship as he could afford, shut out as they were, by choice and long habit, from the society of many people in their own rank of life.

“A privilege on both sides,” dear little Mrs. Deeping said to herself, as she packed up a few extra fine collars and pocket-handkerchiefs in her son’s scantily-filled portmanteau, and carefully brushed the broadcloth coat, altered

from one of his poor father's, which must be Hugh's best for so many, many months, and put a pair of black kid gloves into a little box by themselves, cautioning him always to wear them when he went to Lyneton Abbots on Saturday afternoons.

For Hugh, in common with some other young collegians who have a taste for literary pursuits, was a little bit careless in matters pertaining to dress, often ignoring his gloves altogether when he went for a walk, or wearing both of them in one of his side pockets, which, as his mother said, was no practical use whatever. And people in the Lynetons' rank of life thought so much about these little things. Indeed, it often made all the difference in the world to them whether or not a man was particular about his gloves, and the cut of his coat, and the set of his collar.

She hoped dear Hugh would be careful then, and do his best to make a favourable impression on a family who would doubtless have it in their power to put so much brightness and pleasantness into his life. Not that she wanted him to cultivate a foppish anxiety about his dress—nothing of the sort; indeed, she was sure her boy would never descend to anything so low as that; but there was a degree of care which a gentleman and a minister's son was bound to bestow upon himself, and that was the sort of care she wanted dear Hugh to take whenever he went to Lyneton Abbots, and not have his collar all on one side, or both his gloves in his pocket, instead of on his hands, and his coat as if it had been drawn through a woolsack, as it very often looked when he went out with his sister in the holidays. He must remember his posi-

tion, and live up to it, even though things were not so bright with him now as once they were.

Poor little Mrs. Deeping! As though the choicest of French kid gloves, worn with religious exactness, or the most faultless coat that ever Stultz invented, or even the rarest companionable qualities, and an intimate acquaintance with all the Greek and Latin poets extant, could make Gwendoline Lyneton and her brother give more than high-bred courtesy to a man whose ancestors went no farther back than his great-grandfather—a man, moreover, who, whatever his internal qualifications might be, was counting-house clerk to an iron-master, and lodged at a second-rate bread and biscuit dealer's shop in the Grosmont Road, and had an uncle in the haberdashery line.

Poor Mrs. Deeping!

CHAPTER XII.

SO Hugh said good-bye to his mother and sister, and instead of going back to the studious retirement of his college chambers, there to hold sweet converse with the great minds of other ages, to rehearse the flowing numbers of Homer, or Pindar's stately odes, or the grand thoughts of *Æschylus* and *Euripides*, mingling all these with thoughts of a future when he should win great sway over the minds of men, and in time, perhaps, carve out for himself no mean name in his country's literature,—instead of all this, he found himself that same evening in a shabby-fine drawing-room over a provision-dealer's shop,

redolent of Wiltshire bacon and American cheese; an essentially vulgar, common-place room, in whose atmosphere it seemed impossible to think of anything more sublime than groceries and pickles. A room crammed with tawdry fancy-work and scratchy crayon libels on the fair handiwork of nature; so different from the little college study where in months past he had spent so many pleasant hours, with its air of peaceful seclusion and refinement, its memories of great thoughts and noble purposes—thoughts and purposes, alas! quite useless now; for what had a counting-house clerk to do with great thoughts, and what noble purposes could he ever achieve beyond the perpetual adding up of long rows of figures, and the earning thereby of eighty pounds a year, with the distant hope of an advance if he behaved himself well, and gave his whole

soul to the ledger? A very noble purpose that; one that seemed worthy to match the room, with its shabby-fine furniture, and the cheese and bacon odour which pervaded it.

And then, when he grew tired of the sublime interior prospect, the tawdrily curtained window would admit him to another equally elevating. Trade, trade, nothing but trade; boot-shops, confectioners' shops, druggists' shops, drapers' shops, never even a bookseller's window to be seen up and down the whole long line of street, or anything to remind him that life had other needs than those of eating, drinking, and being clothed. And for sound, instead of the wind swirling up through groves of beech trees which shaded all the college garden, or the sweet chime of bells calling to evening-prayer, there were rude street noises ever jarring past; drunken men laughing and

screaming, barrel-organs grinding out their interminable screech, hollow-eyed women singing for halfpence in front of dirty kerbstones. And when all these were silent for a few minutes, some lilting song, strangely unlike the sweet ballads his sister used to sing to him, came winding up the stair from that little back parlour where Sarah Matilda was cultivating her taste for the fine arts. Sad contrast between the life that was and the life that had been—the life that might have been!

And then that coffin carried past by a couple of whistling journeymen! As though it was not enough for him to have lost so much—to have been disappointed so bitterly, but he must needs be reminded of all the funereal past, have death and the grave so rudely thrust back upon him when he would fain have put them away for a little season,

not from want of love to the dead, but that he might win strength better to toil for those whom the dead had left dependent upon him.

Nor was the state of the case much improved when a brisk knock was heard at the door, and Mrs. Mallinson came in, all bustle and fuss and importance. Mrs. Mallinson had no intention of letting her new lodger feel oppressed with loneliness on this the first night of his sojourn under her roof.

“ You'll excuse me coming in again, sir—” it was the third time she had made her appearance since tea—“ but I just stepped up to say as if you're fond of music, and would like to hear my daughter at her practising, we shall always be quite willing for you to make yourself free to come into the back parlour of an evening. We always sit in the back parlour

of an evening when this here room is let, and if you like to turn the gas down and let the fire out, you'll find everything comfortable, and yourself welcome like one of the family, as it's always my wish to make people feel themselves at home, and always was. And she's uncommon clever at her music, is Sarah Matilda, and so she ought, too, for we paid six guineas a year for it, did my husband and me, when we sent her to Miss Veneerings' to finish off her schooling. Six guineas a year, not to mention the pieces, which came to as much more, and forty pounds for a piano for her when she was finished off complete. But she keeps it up well, she does, and takes the high notes beautiful, if only she isn't nervous, which strangers makes her; and she leads all the singing at our new chapel, so that we shall overget the expenses of her schooling by-and-by; for leaders with good

voices wants a deal of pay here in Oresbridge, where there's so many places of worship, and all of them well looked to for singing, as I may say."

And Mrs. Mallinson sniffed, a vehement one-sided sniff, which seemed to draw her whole face after it in a lateral direction, insomuch that Hugh wondered how her nose, and mouth, and facial muscles in general, would ever regain their normal state. They did, however, and Mrs. Mallinson went on. It was such an easy thing for her to go on when once she had set off.

"Yes, we shall overget the expense by-and-by, unless—" and here Hugh's landlady smiled complacently—"unless she should take it into her head to settle, which there's many things more unlikely; for being an only child, and us, as we may say, tolerably well-off, she's a good deal

sought after. Not but that it would be a great loss to her father and me, being such a useful, handy girl about the house ; for I always brought her up to know about cooking and preserving, and that there ; and, indeed, to the cause, too, I may say, for she's always willing to take a tray at a tea-meeting, is Sarah Matilda, or stand at a bazaar, or make herself useful in any public way whatever, as I say it's the duty of a professing person to do, and to be a burning and a shining light, as the Scripters says, and not to hide our talents under a bushel, which there's no manner of sense in doing, especially when the cause in the midst of us wants supporting, as it does very much, sir, in this here place, and looks to me and my husband to keep it up in a manner, as we shouldn't feel ourselves drawn out to do if it wasn't for him being at the head of the cause, and having to take the

chair, and keep it on its feet with five-pound notes, or a guinea in the plate, being such a public situation."

And here Mrs. Mallinson stopped for an instant in her tide of talk, and bustled across the room to brush off a stray crumb or two which had been left on the tea-table.

"It's that stupid Betsy, sir, as never clears the tea-things off properly ; but I'll give her a good scolding about it as soon as ever I go down, and you shan't have nothing of that sort to complain of no more, sir."

"Oh ! pray don't give yourself the trouble," replied Hugh, who, sitting by the window, and still gazing absently out into the dim street, had scarcely had the opportunity, even if he cared for it, to put in a word. "I assure you I did not see the crumbs until you noticed them. Pray do not let me bring the poor

girl into trouble. I daresay it was dusk when she cleared the things away."

Though, really, kind-hearted as he was, Hugh would almost have wished the threatened scolding to take place, if only that it might hurry Mrs. Mallinson away, and so put a stop to this inexhaustible monologue. But Mrs. Mallinson showed no intention of going away. After clearing off the last of the crumbs, she walked leisurely round the room, dusting the ornaments with her pocket-handkerchief, and talking in the high-pitched voice which seemed habitual to her.

"Thank you, sir, you're very kind, but she must be kept up to the mark. Girls is always best kept up to the mark. And I'd heard tell, sir, as you'd been accustomed to have things clean and particular, and the dusting properly attended to, which every gentleman

has a right to, and I don't mean as you shall have any occasion to complain of the same whilst you're in my apartments. For we wrote, sir, did me and my husband, to the reference in London which you mentioned to us. No offence, sir, I hope," added Mrs. Mallinson, in a bustle, seeing that Hugh drew himself up with a little accession of dignity at the mention of this word reference; "but, you see, there's so much imposition now-a-days, especially in a place like Oresbridge, where people is always coming and going, and you can never tell what they are, nor where they come from, nor what they mean to do, unless you get a character from some one you can trust to, particular if it's going to be for a continuance, as I hope, sir, you'll find it convenient to be, so long as it's agreeable to both parties. And he told us, did the gen-

tleman, as you were everything that could be wished, and regular of a night, and to be depended upon for the rent because of the salary coming in quarterly, which I'm glad of, both on your account, and me and my husband's, for long bills is what I never could bear. And it's a good business, too, is the iron, and one as a young man can make almost anything of, as I tell Sarah Matilda, when she talks of settling with somebody in the law, or something of that sort. I always say there's nothing like trade, especially the iron trade, and she couldn't please me better than to make up her mind to it.

"And the other, sir, will be healthful for you in a manner," continued Mrs. Mallinson. "I mean the managing for Mr. Lynton, for he told us, did your uncle, as you would be out there on Saturday afternoons, so as we

could use the room ourselves if we'd a mind to, which was very polite of him, me and my husband thought."

"Very, indeed," thought Hugh also. "Almost too much so." And he pictured Sarah Matilda entertaining her friends amongst his books and papers. However, he said nothing, only mentally resolved to take care of his keys; and Mrs. Mallinson went on—

"Though I don't suppose it will bring you much in, sir. They're dreadfully poor, is the Lynetons of Lyneton Abbots—can't scarce hold themselves together, and the estate is dropping to pieces as fast as it knows how. Some folks says he's lived a gay life, has the master, for all he looks so stiff and stern, and has done a deal of gaming, and that sort of thing, in his time, though you wouldn't think it to look at him, for he's as grave as a judge

now, and has been ever since I can tell of him. But it may be all people's talk ; some people says anything, and never trouble themselves whether it's true or not. But I will say this for them, as they're the proudest set of folks ever I heard tell of, partic'lar the eldest Miss, and bad for her, too, for pride and poverty don't draw well together, nor ever did. And if she don't look to it, she'll find herself left with nothing else to live upon but her pedigree ; and I'm thinking that'll be a poor living, although folks do say it's the finest pedigree in all this part of the country."

"When *will* the woman go away !" thought Hugh ; and still he had a sort of interest in listening to these little facts about the Lynton Abbots people, though as yet they did not promise much for any satisfaction he should have in social intercourse with the family. His

mother need not surely have been so particular in wishing him to make a favourable impression, if this was the nature of the material he had to work upon.

“No, sir ; it don’t get folks a living, doesn’t a pedigree, and the sort of pride as goes with it is again’ the Scripters, as forbids us to think better of ourselves than we ought to think ; and it isn’t aught of that sort commends us to the Almighty, but only a meek and quiet spirit, and not to speak evil of nobody, and using our best endeavours to support the cause among us, which I’m sure me and my husband has always been accustomed to do, ’specially since we joined ourselves to the new body, and felt it our duty to be burning and shining lights to it, as me and my husband does, though I say it myself.”

“And that was what I was going to tell

you, sir," continued Mrs. Mallinson, "before I saw the crumbs, which gave me a contrary turn, and Betsy shall hear about them as soon as ever I go downstairs, for girls are always best kept up to the mark; there's nothing like keeping girls up to the mark, and making them feel it, if they don't do things proper. I was going to tell you, sir, that we belong to the new body, does my husband and me. We went off a good bit past, when the split, which you've most likely heard about, took place in Park Street. It was mostly along of my husband that we raised a split here. You see, he's a man, is my husband, that don't do to be put upon, nor nought of that sort, and the old body was getting too strict, and the minister wanted over much power, and we that held the purse-strings wasn't agreeable that he should have no more than what he

had got ; and plenty, too, for it don't stand to reason that a congregation should pay the money, and then have no say over the party as they pay it too ; and if the Scripters does say that the labourer is worthy of his hire, they don't say that he's to do just as he's a mind to, and never be kept up to the mark. And when things had got to such a pass as we didn't think they ought to go no further, my husband set himself to make a stand, and he wouldn't give in—no, that he wouldn't—and so we made a split of it, which was what my husband had had his mind set upon all along ; and now we've a cause risen up, and a chapel as we've just had a bazaar for before you come, and a minister as me and my husband does the supporting of him, which is expensive, if we didn't do it because of our duty as professing people, and it being laid

upon us in the Scripters to be burning and shining lights, even to seven pound ten a quarter, if it can't be done for less, which Mr. Mallinson doesn't find it can, and him looked up to as such a leading man in the cause, and always takes the chair, and puts gold in the plate, because of it's being a public situation, and people expecting it of him."

Mrs. Mallinson paused to take breath, and Hugh availed himself of this temporary lull to inquire what time the post closed for the south, hoping thereby to intimate to his voluble landlady that a little quiet would be desirable. But Mrs. Mallinson did not often have such a fine chance for an exposition of her views on Church government, and she was determined to improve it to the utmost. And so, after having told poor Hugh that the south mail had closed an hour ago, and that the Jersey

letters would go out no more until ten o'clock next morning, she set off again with renewed speed upon the old track.

"But it's a sense of duty, sir, that's what it is, and a proper pride that the old body shouldn't be let to triumph over us, which they would if me and my husband didn't come forward with gold, same as their members isn't in a position to do. And I'm opening out to you in this way, sir, because I didn't know but what your sympathies might be along with the split. There's many a one goes with us in secret, as is restrained by the fear of man from an open expression, and the new cause being expensive to keep up; but their views is in our direction all the same, and I'm sure, sir, if it was anything of that sort in your case, me and my husband wouldn't object your having a seat in our pew without any mention

of rent at the present, which is five shillings a quarter, and making you welcome down-stairs when the minister comes. And it's pretty often he does come, too, though whether it's on account of Sarah Matilda I can't say, for there's been nothing but friendliness yet, and I never could see my way quite clear to her being a minister's wife, 'specially in a new cause like the split that we've raised in Park Street, which, as one may say, hasn't got itself fairly started yet, though I don't doubt but what it will lengthen its cords and strengthen its stakes, and get a better place of worship and a minister of its own, and everything that's proper, and be flourishing like a green bay tree when the old chapel's done its work, as some of the leading men among us says it has at the present time, the increase of members last year being only an expiring effort,

and not such a per-centge as ours, when all is said and done. You see, sir, we're told in the Scripters that one is set up and another put down, and that's the way with everything in this world, as our young minister said when he came to tea yesterday, and there's a cross for everybody to bear, when I was giving him my views about his sermon last Sunday, it not being so clear in its doctrines as me and my husband could have wished.

“And now, sir, if you would like to hear Sarah Matilda at her music, I’m sure she’ll be proud to favour you with anything you’ve a mind to ask for,” said Mrs. Mallinson, holding the door open with the evident expectation that Hugh would follow her downstairs into the back parlour, and ask for a renewal of the dulcet strains which had been winging their upward flight in company with the odour of

new bread and smoked bacon, for the last hour.

But Mr. Deeping very wisely asked for nothing but his candle, and having got it, he went to bed, first, however, wishing Mrs. Mallinson a courteous good-night, which that lady returned with hearty good-will, and then went back again to the parlour, sniffing as she went in an unusually satisfied manner.

Doubtless there would be more luggage to come, and she liked young men who kept good hours at night. It was the commencement of all sorts of success in the world, for a young man to keep good hours at night.

CHAPTER XIII.

HUGH DEEPING went to bed that night weary and discontented, out of love with himself and his new life, and everything belonging to it. Only one sweet thought nestled in his heart, and that was the thought of his mother and sister, for whom he was willing to suffer much, if he could but make their home pleasanter, if he could but save from the need of daily toil those who had already denied themselves so much for him. And the thought that they were remembering and praying for him, was the last that floated dreamlike through his mind before sleep and forgetfulness came.

He was awakened next morning by the taking down of shutters from the shop windows, a work which the apprentice-boy performed with much needless clatter and confusion. Hugh opened his eyes, expecting to see the pretty white muslin curtains which shaded his room in the little cottage at Jersey, and beyond them the reddening leaves of the Virginian creeper which covered that end of the house. But, instead, he only saw the green and black bars of an imitation Venetian blind, done in glazed calico, through which the dim light struggling in, revealed a very smart coloured paper, and a suit of furniture, painted in far-off—very far-off—imitation of maple, and an imitation marble chimney-piece, on which stood a pair of imitation Parian busts of Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott, with a large piece of fused cinder, not imita-

tion, from one of the Oresbridge furnaces.

The piece of cinder recalled him to a sense of his situation. He remembered where he was; that this cold, yellow sunshine, which was doing its best to expose the imitation paint and marble of his new lodging, had laboured with painful loss of its original purity, through the smoke and vapour of the great town of Oresbridge, the centre of the iron working district, and that all this whistling, and shouting, and screaming of milk girls, and hooting of dustmen, came from the streets of that same great town of Oresbridge, the town which was to be his home for many months, perhaps many years, perhaps all his life.

He remembered, too, that this very day, instead of studying those old Greek poets whose noble thoughts had stirred within him, in days gone by, such dreams of future honour and

renown, he must go and bow respectfully to his new master, and stand hat in hand whilst his work was explained to him. And be cooped up in a dingy little counting-house, amid the din of hammers, and the hot breath of smelting furnaces, within hearing, perhaps, of many a rude gibe and oath from the Oresbridge workmen, whose fame in that respect had reached even down to the quiet little cottage in Jersey.

And from that dingy counting-house his only change would be to another, perhaps equally dingy, though in the midst of pleasanter surroundings, where, under the dictatorship of a stiff old country squire, not purse-proud, certainly—for, if Mrs. Mallinson's information was correct—the Lynetons of Lynton Abbots were as poor as church mice, but pedigree-proud, which was just as bad, he

would have to plod through estimates, and balance-sheets, and specifications, and arrears of bad debts. And then, perhaps, as part of his weekly occupation on the estate, he would be expected to go in the character of bailiff to the poverty-stricken cottagers, and worm out of them, by hard words and threats of jail or workhouse, the painfully earned rent, which, after all, would go such a very little way towards mending the Squire's failing fortunes—fortunes diminished, most likely, by gaming, or fast living, or other kinds of needless extravagance. Not much prospect of social intercourse there; not much need for kid gloves, and extra-fine collars, and careful attention to his personal appearance. For if Mrs. Mallinson said truly, the most that he was likely to get from the Lynton Abbots people was a mean salary and supercilious neglect.

This was the picture which presented itself to Hugh Deeping's mental vision as the shop-boy's clatter roused him from his morning's sleep. Only this, never anything more than this, unless the iron business proved a success, and after long, patient plodding at the counting-house drudgery, he got an advance of salary, or a confidential post near the manager, or perhaps—which was the summit of his uncle's ambition for him—he was admitted to a small share in the concern, a very junior partnership, involving much of the trouble, and very little of the profits. And then farewell for ever to the bright dreams of his youth, to the sweet seclusion of literary pursuits, or the not less sweet consciousness of power over the minds of other men—power to move, and sway, and rouse them by that eloquence which, he somehow felt, lay

dormant within him, only waiting for circumstances to develop it. He could have been so great ; he could have done so much. He could have made his mother and sister so proud of him, if only——

And he looked at the cold yellow sunlight coming in through the imitation Venetian blinds, and lighting up imitation maple furniture, and he heard the clinking of milk cans in the street, and just below him the everlasting creak of a new coffee-grinding machine, sending up a wearisome odour, which made him feel as if he would like to consign all the Mocha in the world, superfine and otherwise, to perdition.

Also, if he needed anything more to remind him of his altered position, there was Mrs. Mallinson's voice raised to its very highest pitch just at the bottom of the stairs, adminis-

tering to Betsy, who was at the top of the house, that threatened reprimand about the bread crumbs, and finding fault with her for not setting the new lodger's boots at his bedroom door first thing in the morning. What, Mrs. Mallinson said, did the girl think she was hired for, if somebody else had to seek after the lodger's boots, and attend to their being taken up in a morning; and what did she mean by leaving the crumbs about in that way, just as if it wasn't her business to see them properly cleared; and if that was the way she meant to go on, the sooner they parted the better, for Mrs. Mallinson had not kept house for nearly thirty years without knowing what a maid-of-all-work's duty was; and so long as she was a mistress, she meant to have that duty done, yes, and well too; no leaving about of crumbs on *her* tea-tables,

or slipping over of gentlemen's boots in a morning; that was a thing she never allowed, and never intended to allow, for if there was one thing more than another that she had always set her face against, it was slipperiness, and Betsy was to come downstairs that very instant, and see that Mr. Deeping's boots were properly cleaned and set outside his bed-room door, where Mrs. Mallinson expected they should be set every morning, so long as he remained in the apartments.

To which reprimand, with its

“ Notes of linked sweetness long drawn out,”

Betsy, whose soul could also be roused within her upon occasion, answered at the extremest pitch of *her* voice, from the top of the garret stairs. She had never been hired to wait upon a lodger; no, that she hadn't, and she didn't mean to do it, no, that she didn't;

and if it was for the finest gentleman in Oresbridge, she wasn't going to black any more boots than had been mentioned for the wages, no, that she wasn't. And she shouldn't be put upon, no, that she shouldn't, with an extra breakfast and tea which had never been agreed upon when she took the place; and if Mrs. Mallinson wasn't satisfied, she might suit herself with another maid that day month, for there were plenty of situations to be got with better wage and less to do for it than a provision-dealer's shop where lodgers were took in, and saddled upon the maid-of-all-work, without so much as saying 'by your leave,' which was a thing she wasn't going to put up with, no, that she wasn't, and so she should consider herself at liberty that day month.

Hugh Deeping listened to this fierce ob-

jurgatory warfare in profound disgust, as he arranged his collar before the cheap maple-framed looking-glass in front of the imitation Venetian blind. And, as if he had not had enough of her sweet voice, Mrs. Mallinson was in his sitting-room when he reached it, dusting the glass shade over Sarah Matilda's wax fruit, ready to bear down upon him with her pitiless cataract of talk.

But this time Mr. Deeping returned such short and manifestly uninterested answers, not even appearing to have heard that there was such a thing as a split in any of the dissenting congregations of Oresbridge, still less acknowledging the remotest sympathy for, or the faintest desire to acquaint himself with any of the merits and bearings of this particular split, that his landlady, after about a quarter of an hour's exposition of it, took

up her duster and returned to the back parlour, sniffing as she went, but in by no means so approving a manner as on the previous evening. There was nothing she enjoyed so much as a good stiff uninterrupted dissertation on the origin, progress, merits and prospects of the split which her husband had been fortunate enough to accomplish amongst the members of the congregation worshipping in Park Street. Mr. Deeping had listened so attentively to the somewhat lengthy exposition of last night, and had so readily accepted the proposal of closing the subject then, to resume it at some future time, that she confidently reckoned upon him as a proselyte to the new cause, and quite looked forward to his occupation of the vacant seat in Mr. Mallinson's pew, at the Grosmont Road chapel. No wonder, then, that she felt herself aggrieved by his curt replies this morning, and

sniffed with vigorous dissatisfaction as she left him to that moody solitude which he was foolish enough to prefer to her able and eloquent setting forth of the peculiarities of the Oresbridge split.

If Mrs. Deeping and her daughter Mary could have looked in upon Hugh as he discussed his lonely breakfast in the cheap-fine sitting-room over Mr. Mallinson's shop, they might well have prayed for a more resigned spirit to take possession of him ; for truly his face wore anything but the dignified calm of a man who has learned in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content.

Three months is scarcely long enough for any one, especially a youth ardent of feeling and strong of impulse, to learn the lessons of trust and patience, or to think with other than bitter regret of a blow which has struck far away from

him a life once full of hope and promise, and thrust him out into another, in which, whatever toil and effort he may put forth, will only lead to inglorious rest ; to wealth, perhaps competence and ease, but never to that high vantage ground of influence of which he had once so proudly dreamed.

Hugh Deeping's experience of life had not yet taught him his own weakness, nor, after bitter proof of that weakness, led him out of himself to seek the strength in which alone any true man can conquer and go bravely on. He had yet to learn that life's best purpose may be reached, its noblest ends fulfilled, as well through the common beaten track of rough endeavour and honest toil, as through the sheltered path of studious leisure along which he had once sought to tread. He was just in that vexing transition state which seldom comes more than once in a

lifetime, when a man's powers, and the work to which those powers must needs be bent, appear sadly at variance. The immovable finger-post of duty pointed him right on to a course where as yet he could see only briars and thorns. Inclination, ever so much pleasanter than duty, beckoned him onward where no thorns sprang up, and where no vexing briars would hinder his speedy reach of that shining goal which duty did not so much as suffer him to behold.

Three months ago Hugh Deeping's life lay clearly before him. He knew well enough what he was going to do. He had but to work on, gather up rich store of learning, and then come forth from his seclusion to use the power which this would give him over others. No rude toil in that life; no rough battling with natures coarser than his own; no shutting up of his higher life, whilst what he was pleased to think

the common one did its humble task work. Now all this was changed. Two rooms over a provision-dealer's shop, in a second-rate street, in a smoky manufacturing town, where he must bring himself down to the level of people whose ideas never travelled beyond their own little Shibboleth of sectarianism ; a dingy counting-house amongst smelting furnaces, bellows and hammers, where he must chronicle the rise and fall of iron, and the amount of fuel which those same insatiable furnaces dragged down day by day into their fiery jaws ; the incoming of pigs of metal, and their out-going in some other form ; where he must dole out workmen's wages, and add up columns of figures from dawn to sunset, day after day, week after week, year after year, with such scant patience as he could gather together for the doing of it. This was the life he must lead now.

And Hugh Deeping, in his young, hot-headed discontent, would have laughed to scorn anyone who ventured to tell him that such a life as that could ever be made a noble or a worthy or a beautiful thing.

CHAPTER XIV.

IT was on the afternoon of his first Saturday at Oresbridge that Mrs. Mallinson's lodger set out to Lynton Abbots, to present himself to his employer there in the character of bailiff, secretary, steward, clerk, or whatever else that stiff, stern old country squire, of whose antecedents and present position Mrs. Mallinson had given him so unfavourable an impression, might choose to call him.

He had already taken a brief introductory survey of the scene of his future labours. A week ago he had made his bow to Mr. Feverige, junior partner in the Bellona iron-works; a tall, spare man, who looked as if he had absorbed the

surplus iron of the concern into his own composition, so very metallic was his whole aspect and bearing. He received Hugh kindly though, promising before long to take him over the works and explain to him the progress of manufacturing. But the first morning, he said, must be devoted to business ; there was nothing, he said, like getting an insight into the business first thing, and he had come down earlier than usual that morning to show him the books, and give him an idea of what would be expected from him. And so he conducted his young accountant through what seemed to Hugh very like a section of the nether regions, across vast sheds floored with planks of sheet-iron, where half-clad, Titanic-looking men, with iron-sandalled feet, were dragging about after them writhing fiery serpents of red-hot metal ; and past furnaces before whose blazing mouths other men with

visors over their faces were standing, kneading, stirring, and puddling huge masses of molten ore, then forking it out and rushing away with it over the clanking floors to rollers, which flattened it into boiler-plates. Passing these, they came to a counting-house, about the size of a railway signal-man's box, delightfully situated between a couple of steam-worked hammers, which were going from morning to night with clock-like regularity, sending out at every stroke a shower of golden sparks from the burning metal which they were torturing into shape and firmness.

Here Hugh was shown the work to which he was to devote the remainder of his life ; columns of figures drawn up in Macedonian phalanx, and seemingly as unconquerable ; balance-sheets, bills of sale, tables of workmen's wages, price-lists, estimates and invoices. A pleasant contrast, truly, to *Æschylus* and *Euripides*, or the fine

theories and subtle speculations of the German philosophers. But much more productive too, as many a princely fortune, hoarded by men who had begun life in such a little counting-house as that in which Hugh was to labour, might testify. Greek poetry and German philosophy might be very well in their way, but for success in the world there was nothing like iron.

In that same little counting-house Hugh had worked five long weary days, quite long enough to deepen his distaste into dislike, and his dislike into disgust. Five long days, and never a breath of fresh air, never a gleam of any other sunshine than that which crept so feebly in between the chinks of those iron-roofed sheds in the Bellona works, or struggled down through Oresbridge murk and smoke into his tawdry sitting-room in the Grosmont Road. For they kept long hours at the Bellona works, from

nine o'clock in the morning until six in the evening, with an hour in the middle of the day for dinner; that was Hugh's stint of labour, and dreary enough he found it.

So he was glad of a change, though it might only be from bad to worse, from the grave, patronising civility of the metallic Mr. Feverige to the proud reserve of the Squire of Lyneton Abbots, who would doubtless, as Mrs. Mallinson had hinted, make him feel plainly enough that he was but an underling, a little better perhaps than the coachman or the footman, but only like them, a machine for doing needful task work. Still, he would at any rate get a walk into the country, and that, in the sunny October time, was worth something.

So on this Saturday afternoon, after washing away the smuts, of which he always brought home a liberal supply from the Bellona works,

he donned his best suit and extra fine collar and black kid gloves, and tried to make himself look as much like a gentleman as he could, before setting off to his new sphere of duty.

To tell the truth, it was no easy matter to make Hugh Deeping look like a gentleman, such a gentleman, at least, as one sees in a tailor's fashion sheets, or the dress boxes of a provincial theatre. For however well his coats were cut, they never seemed to fit him properly, because of an awkward way he had of carrying himself ; not a stoop exactly, but a careless swing of the shoulders, learned most likely by walking up and down those college avenues with both hands in his pockets, as he so often used to walk with his fellow-students when they were getting their subjects ready for the debating society. And his hair did not sprout out in nice glossy little curls from under the brim of

his hat, as it might have done if he had trained it properly, with much expense of time and pomatum—given his mind to it, as some people do. And he had a style of walking peculiar to himself, so that in dry weather his boots were always covered with dust, and if the roads chanced to be wet, they became a shapeless conglomerate of mud. And just now too, the disappointment which he was cherishing with so much care had graven a dark frown across his usually open face, and made him thrust his hands into his pockets, with an air of defiance which might do well enough for stage purposes, but which was not at all pleasant nor attractive for every-day use on a genteel country road. So that when Sarah Matilda stood at one of the front windows, watching him down the street on his way to Lyneton Abbots, she was more than half correct in remarking to Mrs. Mallinson,

“ He doesn’t look a bit like a gentleman, Ma, and I’m sure I don’t think I shall ever be able to fancy him.”

It was a warm genial afternoon in early October. The golden sunlight, which had such hard work to struggle through Oresbridge smoke, came down broadly enough on the great oak trees of the Lynton Abbots road. It flushed into brighter tints the brown and yellow leaves which yet lingered on the fast-thinning brambles, and shone through the crimson maples, lighting up into coral-like brilliance their red ripe clusters of berries. And many a miniature forest of fern and bracken grew upon the sloping banks, shadowing for those who chose to seek them, little green cushions of moss and tiny wild geraniums and pale primula leaves, which had crept there for shelter from summer’s glaring heat.

And over the distant country-side there brooded that soft grey haze which comes with early autumn-time ; a pearly veil through which could just be seen the outline of the hills lying far away westward beyond Lyneton Abbots. A still, pleasant, dreamy afternoon it was, such as the year lets fall sometimes as she goes away, a stray gleaner dropped from the overfull sheaf of autumn which she is carrying into Time's great garner.

Hugh Deeping's nature was strangely susceptible to passing influences. As much as most women, and far more than the generality of men, he was the creature of circumstances. His best friends could not always tell in what mood they would find him. A gloomy day, a harsh, unkind word, a smoky chimney, an unexpected twinge of headache, would change for him the whole aspect of

the outer world, darkening his horizon, crushing the spirit out of him, and making him feel as if life were scarcely worth the having. And as he was easily depressed, so as easily by a pleasant change in the aspects of things, could he be led back again to the olden brightness, which was after all the prevailing bent of his mind.

And so that irritable impatience which already had him under its sway when he got within reach of Mrs. Mallinson's interminable orations, and which only changed to gloomy discontent or hopeless despondency when he contemplated his prospects at the Bellona iron-works, cleared away before this golden afternoon sunshine, like the mist which only eight little hours ago had shrouded that landscape, now so warm and bright, in one unbroken pall of gloom. He began to feel as if there

was some brightness left in the world, after all; as if everything and everybody were not quite leagued in enmity against him. A little of the old springiness came back, the joyous overflow of life which used to make him such a merry companion in those pleasant college days. He felt young again. He wanted to pull off his coat, to toss his cap up in the air, to frisk like a boy amongst those fallen leaves over which the sunshine crept in such golden blinks, to play leap-frog over the old stumps by the roadside, anything to work off a little of the vitality which had been pent up so long. And when, about a mile from Lyneton Abbots, he came to a gnarled oak-tree, whose rugged branches stretched half-way across the road, this impulse could no longer be resisted. He climbed, schoolboy fashion, up to its very top, got a splendid

view of the surrounding country, filled his pockets with acorns, and only discovered when he reached the ground again that his black kids were ruined for the remaining term of their existence, his glossy wristbands marked with many a green lichen stain from the oak branches, and his "Persigny" tie, which only an hour ago he had taken such pains to "do up" into a proper bow before Mrs. Mallinson's looking-glass, hanging in a long straight ribbon over his shoulder.

But Hugh had never yet been deeply concerned about the appearance of his outer man. He knotted up the luckless Persigny as well as he could by guess, purposing to take a leisurely survey of it in the next brook he passed. Then, pushing his soiled wristbands out of sight, smoothing his hat with his coat-sleeve, and giving himself a general setting-

to-rights shake, he went on his way, thankful that things were no worse.

Soon he came in sight of the village. One by one its cottage chimneys peered out among the bushes, sending forth little curls of blue smoke, which told of Saturday cooking going on within. Then he neared the village green, where a party of pinafored urchins were performing gymnastic exercises upon the stocks, and another party, of more advanced notions, had got up a game of cricket, with wooden splinters for bats, and a few long dry sticks from the nearest copse for wicket stumps. Hugh could willingly have taken sides with them, and got a few notches, just for the sake of bringing back the old schoolboy feeling, but it was now half-past two, and at three he was to meet Mr. Lyneton. So he contented himself

with merely standing by for a few minutes and watching them, greatly to the delight of their youthful vanity, and then he went across the green to the churchyard, beyond which they told him he would find the Manor-house.

He felt such a bright, joyous sense of freedom, there in that quiet village, away from the din and smoke of Oresbridge, out of hearing of Mrs. Mallinson's incessant patter-patter, and Sarah Matilda's sentimental ballads, and the everlasting grind of the coffee-machine. Away, too, from the Bellona iron-work, with its belching furnaces, and clouds of smuts, and showers of red-hot sparks, and visored puddlers forking out the huge clods of half-molten ore. It seemed months, and not just a few short days, since Mr. Feverige had piloted him for the first time through that Tophet of a place, and showed him into

the little signalman's box between the great hammers, where he was to spend eight hours of every day in looking over and keeping accounts. Indeed, that might have been a dream, nothing more than a dream, except that by just putting his hand into his waist-coat pocket he could feel the card which Mr. Feverige had given him on the first morning of his attendance, a very neat lithographed card, with a picture at the top representing the vast sheds, and tall chimneys, and blazing furnaces of the Bellona iron-work. And on the back of the card was a memorandum, which he had jotted down only a few hours before, to remind him that on the following Monday Mr. Sparkes, the senior partner, would be down at the counting-house to look over his work. That was no dream, but sober, certain reality.

He crossed the churchyard, where a few moss-covered gravestones were peering out from beneath the fallen chestnut-leaves, and opening a little gate under the yew-trees on the further side of it, he found himself in a narrow, grass-grown footpath, directly opposite a second gateway, whose crumbling stone griffins, quaint and defiant as when, three hundred years ago, they were first placed there, kept watch and ward over the old house at Lyneton Abbots.

CHAPTER XV.

THE place had a certain faded beauty of its own, as of some aged face which has kept, through all the toil and rack of life, some sweet memory of its youth, some faint trace in form and feature of the long-ago happy past. The sunshine lay softly enough upon it now, pencilling the shadows of the ivy-leaves upon the dormer windows, and flushing the russet brown lichens which darkened its stone facings and terraces. Like jets of crimson rain, the fuchsias showered down their blossoms upon the vine that trailed its heavily-laden branches along that mouldering wall; the old vine that still gave such purple wealth of fruit, though

many and many a year had gnarled its old trunk, and knotted the hardy stems that were now borne down to the ground, like other more precious things than they, by the very bounteousness of the gifts which they reached forth.

And slowly as afternoon sunlight deepened into the amber glow of early evening, the shadow crept round upon the old sun-dial, crept over quaint, cabalistic figures and hoary legends, scarcely any longer to be read, for the stain which centuries had breathed upon them. And the three stone dolphins under the fountain basin opened wide their gaping mouths, from which the green moss hung down in long festoons, dripping with crystals of dew; for in that sheltered corner of the garden, beneath shadow of laurel and holly, the late autumn sunshine never came.

Hugh Deeping had read of old English homesteads like this, but he had never seen one in all its fair decaying picturesqueness. He stood for a long time by the gateway, ankle deep in the dry leaves which had fallen from the elm-trees by the garden wall; and even as he stood, others kept silently falling, falling round him. He wondered what the story of the old place might be, what memories belonged to it, what life it could be that was lived so quietly and apart in a home whose memories must reach so far back.

Surely a gentle life, not vexed, as Mrs. Mallinson said it was, by pride and paltry care. For though Time's autumn had touched those old walls even as Nature's had touched the trees which sheltered them, there was still such an air of genial friendliness about them, a sort of silent, unspoken welcome, as though

the spirits of the old Lyneton people, the noble, high-born, generous old Lyneton people, who had lived so blameless a life there, and in generations past dispensed the hospitalities of the place with so free a hand, lingered round it still.

The window of the oriel room was open, and Hugh could hear a sound of music and singing—a sweet, low voice, like his sister's. Was it Miss Lyneton's? Surely not; a voice so sweet could never belong to one so cold and proud as Mrs. Mallinson had described her. As he listened, he fancied he saw some one come to the window; and then remembering that, to say the least of it, it was rather ungentlemanly to be standing there in broad daylight, taking a survey of the place in such a leisurely fashion, he pushed open the rusty iron gate, bringing down upon himself thereby

a fresh shower of brown leaves from the elm-trees, and came forward.

Rather an unpleasant thing that coming forward. Hugh would much sooner have lingered in the shadow of those defiant-looking stone griffins, taking in the picturesqueness of the general effect, watching the slant sunshine as it stole past moss and lichen along the garden wall, and flickered in and out among the broad vine-leaves, than have gone boldly up to the old doorway, under the eyes of Abbot Siward himself, and lifted the heavy brazen knocker, whose fall must waken such a resonant echo through the dim, quiet place. However, that brazen knocker must be raised, and the slumbering echoes wakened, and Hugh did both with an unaccustomed tremor of expectation.

A grey-headed old serving-man, who looked

as antique and stately as the house itself, came to the door, and ushered him into a black-oak wainscotted library, lined with books in very worn, faded backs, and having a mingled odour of Russia leather and Autumn leaves. The room was unoccupied, save by a great Newfoundland dog, also very old and grisled, who stood on a tiger skin hearthrug, with his back to the fire, eyeing the new-comer with dignified reserve, conscious that since the said new-comer had been ushered into that apartment, he was of sufficient importance to be treated with respect, though not admitted to the familiar intercourse of an acquaintance.

The music ceased. There was a rustle as of silken raiment across the matted hall, and then Hugh Deeping was aware of the presence of a lady, whose quiet bearing and

easy, self-possessed manner proclaimed her to be the mistress of the house, none other than Miss Lynton, of Lynton Abbots.

Hugh bowed low, much lower than he was in the habit of bowing even to ladies. He had pictured to himself a cramped-up spinster, erect, rigid, stiff as the stone griffins who kept guard over her ancestral home, fronting him with an aspect of chilly Norman dignity, speaking to him, if indeed she condescended to speak at all, in a voice out of which pride had long ago quenched all the sweetness. Instead, there stood before him a lady of gentle presence, from whom the spring and buoyancy of early girlhood only seemed to have passed away, because they could never have comported quite easily with that meek gravity which sat as naturally upon Gwendoline Lynton as her diadem

upon the born queen. Not “amiable-looking” exactly; for those dark grey eyes which gazed so calmly upon him from beneath their level brows, had too much firmness and decision in their glance, and the faultless curves of lip and nostril told of will too strong for amiability. But whatever of these spoke out in face and gesture, none had leave to spoil her manner, only to scatter over it that almost imperceptible frost of reserve, which, though it was very distinguished, had always shut out the Lyneton people from much popularity, even amongst those in their own rank of life.

She had only come in to excuse her brother, who was writing a letter of importance in the next room. If Mr. Deeping would be kind enough to wait a few minutes, Mr. Lyneton would join him. And

then, drawing out for his amusement a portfolio of rare old engravings, and again regretting that he should be kept waiting, Miss Lyneton bowed slightly to the young man, and left the room. By-and-by he heard music again, a voice which he could well believe to be hers now, singing some of the solo parts from one of Mozart's Masses. How different, sitting in the old black-oak wainscotted library at Lyneton Abbots, listening to *that* music, and sitting in the shabby, cheap-fine drawing-room over the provision-dealer's shop, hearing Sarah Matilda's wearisome performances !

Hugh was in no mood just then for looking over rare prints. However, he could appreciate the thoughtful care for his comfort which had made Miss Lyneton take the trouble of bringing them out, and, still more, he could

appreciate the perfect courtesy with which he had been treated.

Scarcely more than a dozen words had been spoken between them, yet he felt already that he was received as no servant or underling, but as a man, and a gentleman, too, with a frank yet grave respect, which generously took for granted his worthiness of all that it gave. Very different this from the cold supercilious contempt which he had been led to expect, or even the measured, patronising politeness with which, considering his altered position, he could have been content, receiving it from people who in social rank, if not in real worth and refinement, were in advance of himself. Had he been one of the oldest of the old nobility, with a pedigree as long and untarnished as her own, Miss Lyneton could not have treated him with more gentle stateliness.

Hugh liked it. Not that he was vain or conceited, but just because it made him feel like a man. Already he felt himself warming and expanding under the genial influence of those few words, spoken so calmly, yet with such a frank recognition of his own rights as a gentleman. Mr. Feverige, civil and well-meaning though he might be, would never have apologised for keeping him waiting for an hour together in that dingy little counting-house, whilst he attended to a customer, or transacted some trifling business details. Nor did it ever seem to enter into Mr. Sparke's thoughts that his clerks could have anything to do but wait his pleasure, and be ready when he chose to give them audience. It was there, amidst the smut and din of the Bellona iron-works, and not here, in the courtly seclusion of Lyneton Abbots, that he was to be

considered as a menial—a mere paid agent for the doing of daily task-work.

So thought Hugh Deeping, as he turned over the portfolio of old engravings, now and then exchanging a friendly remark with the Newfoundland dog, who still remained on the tiger-skin rug, with his back to the fire, regarding the new-comer with a kind of distant toleration, as one who had been properly introduced into the mansion, but was not yet to be considered as on a footing of permanent intimacy therein. Hugh did not know that, had he been the veriest threadbare vendor of pencils or quills, or broken-down professional, who had come to that house on a lawful and honourable errand, he would have been treated with the same grave, lofty courtesy. He had yet to learn that beneath all the urbanity of the Lynton people there lay, like granite rock under the

velvet turf of some fair mountain side, that resistless, unconquerable pride of caste and descent which he, from that low-born standing-place of his, could never move or break,—a pride over which any love or passion of his would spend itself as feebly, and do as little harm, as spray on the ocean rocks.

CHAPTER XVI.

HALF an hour later the master of Lyneton Abbots and his young clerk were deep in columns of figures and balance-sheets, which, if not so complicated as those which Hugh had to manage at the Bellona iron-works, were much more hopeless as regarded a successful clearing up. The estate had sadly dwindled down during the times of the later Lynetons. Field after field, plantation after plantation, had been sold to meet the losses incurred by unfortunate speculations in the Oresbridge coal mines, or to pay calls upon shares which had long ago ceased to yield even the scantiest dividend of profit.

One mining company, in which he had inherited his father's responsibilities, still made, from time to time, its heavy claims upon poor Mr. Lynton's scant resources, reducing to a very pitiful circumference those ancestral acres which once stretched for miles round the old home at Lynton Abbots. Claims which Mr. Lynton was too honourable to evade, even though to satisfy them should drive him, as seemed almost likely to be the case, from every foot of land which once he called his own.

The entire rent-roll of the estate now comprised but a few little farms, lying in the neighbouring parishes, and about a dozen tumble-down tenements in the village of Lynton Abbots, whose tenants, owing to the badness of the times, and the low rate of wages for some years past, had got into the habit

of making a passover of rent-day. And as Mr. Lyneton was either too proud, or too kind-hearted, or too unbusiness-like to press his claims, the only tangible result of his Lyneton Abbots property was a considerable yearly tax paid to Government in the shape of inhabited house duty. So that unless the first and second Mrs. Lynetons had had fortunes of their own, neither the Squire's own prospects, nor those of his daughter were very brilliant.

Hugh had a good talent for business, though as yet it had been but slightly cultivated. He soon found out that by a little personal supervision, and a more diligent system of management, the estate might be put into working order, and, at any rate, made to pay its own expenses, if not to yield a very sumptuous income. And when he

found that his new employer, instead of being a hard, grasping man, wringing the poor people's rent out of them by force or threats, had erred only on the side of leniency, and stinted himself in his own expenditure rather than put them to grief for the sake of the few pounds which they had so hardly earned, he set himself with the more cheerful goodwill to understand the whole working of the concern, and try, if possible, to bring it round into something like a remunerative condition. For Mr. Lyneton, spite of his university education and grand descent, was a wretched business man, as might easily be inferred from the estimates and balance-sheets which he brought out for Hugh's inspection. And a much richer estate than that of Lyneton Abbots might soon have been brought to ruin under such thriftless manage-

ment as he exercised upon it. "It will last my time," evidently went far down into Graham Lyneton's character.

They were still busy over plans and accounts, when the library door was opened, and a young girl came in, singing as she came some fragment of an old Scotch song. A fair, pleasant-looking girl, not beautiful, nor with Miss Gwendoline Lyneton's height of stature and grace of mien, yet with a gentle face, and eyes which had a fearless innocence in their straightforward glance.

She had not expected to find any one in the room, for she stopped very suddenly in the midst of her pretty little ballad, and looked inquiringly, first at her father, and then at the stranger, who, sitting with his back to the door, and intent upon a plan of the estate, had not as yet seen her.

"You must go away, Jeanie," said Mr. Lyneton; "we are very busy—we cannot have you here just now."

"Yes, papa, I am going directly. I did not know any one was here. I only came to fetch a book."

And with light, springing quickness, quite unlike her aunt's measured step, Jeanie tripped across to the library, to that corner where "Percy's Reliques," in faded morocco bindings, were ranged on one of the upper shelves.

Ranged just out of her reach too, for after making one or two vain attempts to get at them, she dragged out a pile of old folios, and was going to use them as steps, when Hugh Deeping came forward to her help.

"Can I get the book for you? Which is it that you want?"

Jeanie turned and looked him full in the

face, this stranger whose voice she now heard for the first time; one of those quiet, inquiring looks which seem to ask and tell so much. Twenty years ago, straying by a burnside in that bonnie little Highland glen close by her grandmother's house, Jean Wardour met Mr. Lyneton, and bending on him such a look as that, had won his grave, sad heart. How he knew not, he only felt that it was gone. And after that, stern man though he was, strong and self-controlled, there was no rest for him until the gentle Highland maiden was all his own. And what her mother did with such a look twenty years ago, never dreaming what she had done, Jeanie Lyneton did with the same look now; did it just as unconsciously too.

“Thank you. Please to get me that first volume of ‘Percy’s Reliques;’ the one that has

the ballad of the Nut Browne Mayde in it, I mean."

Hugh reached it down for her, bringing to view as he did so what ought to have been a strip of glossy, snow-white linen, just gleaming from under the sleeve of his coat; but which, as ill-luck would have it, was then neither white nor glossy; stained instead with many a green streak of lichen from that gnarled old oak-tree on the Lyneton Abbots road—Hugh heartily wished now he had never been foolish enough to climb it—and resembling for smoothness nothing more than a sheet of writing-paper which has been crumpled up into a ball and then spread out again.

He was very vexed. He would have given almost anything if he had not gone up to the top of that mouldy old tree, and filled his pockets with acorns, which he thought might be

bulging them out now in an awkward fashion, drawing his coat into all sorts of seams and wrinkles. And then he wondered how the rest of his apparel had fared ; whether that unfortunate Persigny tie was done up in anything like Christian neatness, for he quite forgot to look at it in the brook ; and whether his hair was tolerably neat, or whether, to use his mother's favourite simile, it looked as if it had been trailed through a brier-bush,— questions which had never so much as entered his mind when Miss Lyneton, who was just as likely to notice such things as her niece, had come to meet him with so much stately courtesy. Perfectly needless questions too, since before Jeanie could possibly have had time to make any tour of investigation over the particulars of his toilet, he had placed the book in her hands, and with another

bright look and smile she had hurried away, beginning as soon as she was out of the room again that old Scotch ballad, just at the place where she had left off a minute or two before.

Only a minute or two. And yet how much had been done in that little space of time. That one look of Jeanie Lyneton's, bright, innocent, guileless, would colour all Hugh Deeping's life. The change it wrought might be a blessing or a bane; but once having met and read it, he could never, never go back to the old track any more, never be the gay, thoughtless, free-hearted youth he was when three hours ago he crushed the fallen autumn leaves under his feet on Lyneton Abbots road.

CHAPTER XVII.

SOON after that it grew too dark to work any longer, and Mr. Lyneton would not have the lamps lighted; for he said Mr. Deeping had been working hard enough that day, and it was quite time he began to rest. Whatever else Mr. Lyneton might be unreasonable in, he was certainly not unreasonable in the stint of work which he exacted from those who served him. Hugh tried to fancy Mr. Feverige or Mr. Sparkes dismissing any of their hands, whether weary or otherwise, before the six o'clock bell rang, but the attempt was quite unsuccessful.

Mr. Lyneton fixed the time for his next

visit, when they were to go together over the estate, and see what repairs were absolutely needful. Then he bade Hugh a courteous farewell, thanking him for the trouble he had taken, and the interest which he had shown in his work. Again Hugh thought that if he had been the most nobly born gentleman in the county, he could not have received more courteous treatment. It was so different from the mechanical business-like way in which Mr. Feverige bore himself towards the clerks and upper-class workmen of his concern, considering them as so much material, out of which he was to get a stipulated amount of profit in return for stipulated wages. Never any meeting him on the common ground of man and man, still less gentleman and gentleman. He the moving power of the great machine, they the wheels whose business was to turn round

so many times an hour, and so many hours a day, that was the only relationship which metallic Mr. Feverige seemed to acknowledge between himself and the people who worked under him.

So Hugh Deeping's first afternoon at Lynton Abbots came to a close. With a strange, new sense of life and gladness and manhood, he heard that massive door closed behind him, and found himself once more in the narrow, grassy road which led away to Oresbridge. Standing there behind the shadow of the stone griffins, unnoticed now in the thickening gloom of autumn evening, he could gaze his fill at the old homestead, which a few hours ago had been to him a name and nothing more ; which now seemed to hold so much of his life.

A glow of warm firelight poured through

the oriel window—for the house was too retired to need much envious shutting in of blinds or curtains—and revealed to him the little figure of Jeanie Lyneton, sitting in the broad low window seat, her brown hair falling over the book upon her knee, “Percy’s Reliques” most likely, which he had a while ago reached down for her from that tall bookcase. He knew that ballad of the Nut-Brown Mayde which she was reading over to herself now. He had read it many and many a time, wondering whether he could ever win a love like that which she gave; whether anyone would ever care enough for him to share his life, if need be, in want and exile and privation. Were Englishwomen as true now as they were in the old simple days when that sweet ballad was written? Could they love so well and trust

so faithfully, even through seeming scorn and coldness? And then the words came back to him, so beautiful in their nobleness :—

“ Syth I have here bene partynère
With you of joy and blysse,
I muste alsoe parte of your wo
Endure, as reason is ;
Yet am I sure of one pleasure,
And, shortly, it is this :
That where ye be, me semeth pardè,
I colde not fare amysse ;
For, in my mynde, of alle mankynde,
I love but you alone.”

And he looked away again past the old elm trees to the oriel window where Jeanie sat.

Little Jeanie, whose face, upturned to his for a single moment, had graven itself in his heart for ever. He could recall that face now, with its clear, child-like brow and startled smile; the glance, so innocent and fearless, of the sunny blue eyes, yet with a

shy doubtfulness lurking in their depths, eyes which told so much, but told it so differently from Miss Lyneton.

Unwillingly, and with many a lingering look cast back towards the oriel window, which still poured out its flood of light into the deserted garden, Hugh Deeping turned away down the Oresbridge road. It was almost dark now, only grey twilight enough to outline the bare branches of the trees upon the murky sky; and eastward beyond the town, the red glare of the furnaces shot up like tongues of flame, and then quivered back again, leaving all gloomy as before. The night was so still, that road so free from passing footfall, that he could hear, like the breaking of surf on some rocky shore, the far-off din of the great town, to whose thousands of busy, struggling people, dark-

ness itself seemed to bring no rest. Day and night the tide of their life kept rolling on, with no pause for backward flow. And as he neared the town, and its confused murmur deepened into a distinct, many-voiced tumult, he could distinguish, for they were just upon the western outskirts of Oresbridge, the clang of the Bellona iron-works, that Tophet of flame and toil, where even now a hundred brawny-armed men were breaking the sweet stillness of night with the stroke of their hammers, and the clash of their mailed feet upon the iron floors. Where he, too, must toil on day by day, through so many weary months, to earn for himself, and those who were in some sort dependent upon him, as much as might find them daily bread.

But what were the Bellona iron-works to him, and what any toil and weariness which

must daily vex him there, and what all the little jarring disagreeablenesses of that common-place, vulgar home in the Grosmont Road, the interminable practising of Sarah Matilda, the coarse familiarity of Mrs. Mallinson, from which he had only that morning turned away with scarcely concealed disgust,—now that in the fair domains of fancy so sweet a palace opened to him its golden gates, and made him free of a new bright life, whose freedom and whose brightness no touch of theirs had any power to mar? He could bear it all now. He need no longer make a trouble of any of these things. He had the golden key of a paradise where they could never trouble him.

Hugh Deeping would not have gone back to Oresbridge with such pleasant thoughts as these, if he could have heard a dialogue

which took place in that old oriel room at Lyneton Abbots, even while he stood by the gateway, watching the warm glow of firelight wandering out into the October gloom. A dialogue so simple, that to take her part in it, Gwendoline scarce needed to lift her face from the initial letter which she was illuminating from a copy of one of the old Catholic missals.

“Aunt Gwendoline.”

This was how Jeanie always addressed her father’s sister. No one, save Mr. Lyneton, Miss Hildegarde, and that more than friend away upon the sultry plains of India, ever called Gwendoline by her Christian name alone.

“Aunt Gwendoline.”

“Yes, Jeanie.”

“Who is that gentleman who has been here this afternoon?”

"You mean Mr. Deeping. He is a young man who is coming once a week to help your papa in the management of the estate."

"Yes, I know that well enough," and Jeanie changed her place to the other side of the oriel window, that the firelight might fall more clearly on the book she was reading. Not reading it very carefully, though, for she often stopped to give a kind word or a pat to Rollo, who had come in out of the library, and was now lying at her feet, with his brown muzzle thrust into her little hand. Hugh Deeping, standing there behind the shadow of the stone griffins, unnoticed in the deepening gloom of evening, saw Jeanie change to the other side of the window, and was glad, for the firelight, sweeping over her, gave him a better sight of the graceful bending figure. He could even dis-

tinguish the white little hand uplifted now and then to play with Rollo's shaggy coat, and the gleam of brown falling hair, that rippled back with many a wave and curl from the fair open face. A pleasant picture to look upon, though he did not know that any of Jeanie's thoughts were for him just then.

"Yes, papa told me after he had gone that he was coming on Saturday afternoons to look over accounts; but I mean, what is he, and where does he come from?"

Gwendoline took another film of the gold leaf with which she was filling in the background of her initial letter, fixed it carefully on the paper, and dusted away the shining fragments before she replied,

"I really cannot tell you much about him, except that his references gave him a very

satisfactory character for steadiness and ability; and Graham says, too, that he seems to have plenty of energy. He is clerk in one of the great iron-works at Oresbridge, and he has an uncle who keeps a haberdasher's shop somewhere in London. That is all I know about him."

And though the words were spoken quietly enough, yet the hard granite of the rock beneath—the rock of the old Lynton pride—came up through all the ringing clearness of their tones. Hugh Deeping might dream what dreams he chose, and weave what web of hope seemed fairest across the untouched future; but those dreams would be very empty, and that web of hope would only stretch itself out to be swept away like gossamer films, which sparkle so brightly for an hour or two in autumn morning sunlight,

and then disappear. For as long as Gwendoline Lynton kept that proud spirit of hers, and held so fast the ancient honour of her line, Jeanie's hand would never lie in his, nor her gentle life link itself with fortunes of one so lowly born as he.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HUGH did not hurry over that walk from Lyneton Abbots to Oresbridge. The new hopes and purposes which thronged around him as he trod—thoughtfully enough now—the fallen leaves, and watched the stars creep out one by one over the old house by the church-yard, Jeanie's home, were far too precious to be exchanged sooner than needful for the dim, faded life which would close around him as soon as he got back again to his old quarters, over the provision-dealer's shop. While he could, he would linger over them undisturbed, thinking them into a happier brightness, or if turning away from them

at all, only turning away to the sweet memory which was yet so fresh, which would always be for him now the starting point of his life ; all behind that,—joy, sorrow, whatever it might be, quite vague and dim. For what Hugh Deeping did, he did with his whole heart. When disappointment came, he had entirely bowed under it, seeing no way of escape, no possible brighter days in store for him. Now that hope had come, it took full possession of him, too. He yielded himself entirely to its new, sweet influence. He never staid to think that this also might pass from him, even as the black cloud of disappointment had passed.

So the evening was far spent before he found his way back again to Grosmont Road. Mr. Mallinson's shop was brilliantly illuminated, this being Saturday night, a

season of unusual activity behind the counter. Whole phalanxes of fancy biscuit tins, red-lettered, and bearing the imposing devices of their respective manufacturers, shone resplendent from their exalted station upon the top shelves, more resplendent still by contrast with the canvas-shrouded Westphalia hams, and dun-coloured sides of bacon, and columns of cheeses, which occupied the less conspicuous parts of the premises, side by side with apoplectic-looking barrels of flour, and barricades of bread-loaves just fresh from the bakery behind Mrs. Mallinson's back sitting-room. As for the window, newly arranged that very morning, it presented an appearance which must have filled Mrs. Green's mind with the bitterest sensations of envy, if, as was most likely the case, poor thing! she had little to do but to stand behind her coffee

canisters and criticise it. For a row of gas-lights poured down their reflected brilliance upon a very fairy-land—so Mrs. Mallinson expressed it herself—of biscuits, crumpets, rusks, cakes of all shapes, makes, and devices, labelled according to their respective degrees of excellence, and almost asking to be tasted by the little boys who, with wide-opened mouths and vehement exclamations of desire, were loitering round about.

Mr. Mallinson was frisking from side to side of his shop with brisk activity, now exchanging remarks on the weather and the price of provisions, with some thrifty housewife whose weekly supply of flour he was weighing out; anon breaking off to administer a sharp rebuke to the apprentice boy, who, not having any immediate interest in the profits of the concern, did not look after customers

with quite so much alacrity; then resuming, with marvellous alteration of tone, his remarks on the superior quality of the flour this season, or the very cheap rate at which, owing to a fortunate speculation in the bacon-market, he could supply the best Yorkshire cured.

"Fine night, sir, glasses looking up," was all the flour-dealer found time to say, as Hugh passed through the little narrow door which led out of the shop to the passage and staircase. Mrs. Mallinson had graciously invited her lodger to "make himself free of the shop whenever he had a mind to," a very sensible invitation, since it saved Betsy the trouble of "answering" the front-door more frequently than was absolutely necessary.

The old sounds greeted him as he went up to his own room. Mrs. Mallinson's high-pitched

voice rolled forth its ceaseless volume of talk, broken now and then by that resonant sniff of hers which conveyed such force of expression for approval, or the contrary, according to circumstances. Occasionally, however, Sarah Matilda's scarcely less exalted treble interrupted the current of Mrs. Mallinson's eloquence; and at rare intervals the graver tones of a masculine voice varied the soprano duet, always, however, borne down, before it had said more than half-a-dozen words, by the overmastering accents of the female head of the establishment. Canton House must surely be having company to tea in the back-parlour this evening.

And such, indeed, proved to be the case. For scarcely had Hugh taken off his boots, and straightened out his black kid gloves, sadly marred, alas! by their journey up the

old oak-tree on the Lyneton Abbots road, and spread himself at full length in the slippery easy-chair, intending to spend the rest of the evening in castle-building, instead of taking out his pocket Homer, and reading a few books of that, as he promised himself before going to Mr. Lyneton's,—when Mrs. Mallinson bustled in, somewhat more gaily attired than was her wont, for a cluster of very astonishing scarlet fuschias dangled from her black lace cap, and a violent-patterned collar, with a scarlet bow to match the fuschias, was doing its best to sit comfortably round her bony throat.

She took out her pocket-handkerchief, and began to make a voyage of discovery round the room, lifting up Hugh's boots to see if Betsy had dusted behind them that morning, drawing her finger along the mouldings of the

skirting boards and the gilt frames of Sarah Matilda's pictures, then carefully examining it, to discern, if possible, a darkening shade of dust, upon which she might ground a rebuke to the unfortunate maid-of-all-work. And as she went through this little performance, which Hugh thought might just as well have been attended to whilst he was away, she opened upon him a brisk fire of remarks.

"Glad to see you back again, sir, and I hope you haven't took cold with being out in the night air. These October damps is a terrible trying thing for the chest, and I don't doubt but what you're glad enough to get back to a good fire, and things comfortable about you, which I always try to make them for anybody as takes my apartments; for they do say the house at Lyneton Abbots is that cold and draughty, while the

rheumatism has settled itself in the family, and can't be shook off. And I daresay it's something of that has made them as stiff as what they are, for it's a stiffening thing, is the rheumatism, as ever was; though, for the matter of that, the Lyneton Abbots people didn't need anything to make them stiffer than what they was before."

And Mrs. Mallinson laughed. It was very, *very* seldom that she laughed. She was generally too much engaged in commenting upon the failings of other people, which, as she often said, was not a subject to be laughed about, other people being for the most part such a very poor set; but this was such a pleasant little joke, and one of her own making, too, she really could not help appreciating it. More especially as Mr. Deeping seemed backward in doing so. He sat there

in the easy-chair and looked right into the fire, just as if she had said nothing brilliant. But, then, some people never could understand a joke.

"Yes, it's a great misfortune that the rheumatism should have settled itself in that family, for I'm sure if ever there were people who had as much stiffness as they knew what to do with, it's the family at Lyneton Abbots. Not as I was ever brought personally along with them, for they don't accustom my husband's place of business, nor ever did; not as I consider that an object, for Mr. Mallinson isn't tied to a few orders, as some people is—Mrs. Green for example, as it makes all the difference in the world to her whether she can get an extra customer or not; and I'm sure she's held her head up just like a giraffe ever since Mr. Lyneton's man has got

bread for the family there, which she puts it about the neighbourhood that he has, though I have my doubts, for all she's a joined member of the old body, and sets up for enjoying a blessed experience. I never have anything to say against an experience, if people lives conformable to it; but a business is a much better thing for getting on in the world with, like Mr. Mallinson has got together with his own industry, and always keeping a good article, which I'm proud to say he does, let the markets be what they may."

And Mrs. Mallinson sniffed, with a vigorous upheaval of her right shoulder, which made the fuschias nod their scarlet heads one after another. She did so enjoy having a little to say in the direction of Mrs. Green, especially since the Lyneton Abbots people had

gone past her husband's place of business to buy their bread and flour of the meek-faced widow further down the road.

"But I came up, sir, to-night to say that me and my husband would be glad for you to come and make yourself free of the back parlour, quite in a friendly way with the rest of us, for we've got the minister to his tea, as he mostly comes on a Saturday, when the sermons is off his mind, poor man! and I daresay they're a load for him, he being only young and inexperienced in pulpit-work, and not much of a gift either in doctrines, as I could tell from the very first time I heard him preach at Grosmont Road, though, as I always tell him, doctrines is the importantest things in preaching; me and my husband don't think anything of preaching when the doctrines isn't well set forth. And I

always feel it my duty when Mr. Barton comes, to impress it on his mind as he ought to give special attention in that way, and not be always on the practical enforcements, as he mostly is, meekness and charity, and not speaking evil of no one, and all that sort of thing, which I don't object to, when it's kept in its proper place; but according to my thinking, when all's said and done, doctrines ought to have the foremost stand. And that's what I feel it my duty, as being a leading member of the congregation, to represent to Mr. Barton, him not knowing, as he doesn't, what's suitable to the members."

During the whole of this exposition of her views with regard to doctrine, Mrs. Mallinson had been prosecuting her voyage of discovery round the room, without as yet finding any reasonable cause of complaint against

the maid-of-all-work. Now, however, in the course of her investigations, she stumbled upon Hugh's boots, which he had taken off when he came in from his long walk, and seizing upon them, she carried them in triumph to the head of the stairs, calling to Betsy to come up that instant, and fetch them down, and see that they were properly cleaned. What did the girl think she was hired into the house for, Mrs. Mallinson would like to know, if somebody else was always to be looking after her, and reminding her of what she had to do, and seeing that she did it properly? And no attention paid to anything without being told of it, and nobody's comfort thought of, so long as she could get through her work somehow, and then shut herself up in the kitchen with that ridiculous crochet! Mrs. Mallinson

hadn't patience with it! And did the girl ever mean to come upstairs and fetch the boots down, or was Mrs. Mallinson to stand there with them all night, she should like to know?

Whereupon Betsy, who remembered that other little breeze a week ago, came sullenly upstairs, not without one or two growls of unmistakable defiance, and then clattered down again with the unconscious boots, which seemed destined to operate as frequent disturbers of domestic peace, this being already the second quarrel they had produced since their owner's settlement at Canton House only a few days before.

Having got the boots off her hands, and out of her mind, Mrs. Mallinson returned to the exposition of her views in general.

"And I've got him drawn out, sir, into

serious conversation, as I always think it proper to do with a minister of religion. It's what a minister ought to feel himself called upon to do, is to keep his religion properly before the congregation, and always be ready to express himself when there's an opportunity with something useful, and to the purpose. Which I tell Mr. Barton he isn't so forward to do as me and my husband could wish to see him, being a quiet man, and not so active in letting his light shine, 'specially upon the doctrines, as he ought to be, considering it's a new cause at the present, and naturally wants a deal of bringing forward."

"A pleasant man, though," continued Mrs. Mallinson, with another sniff, "and never sets himself to know better than me and my husband, as, of course, it isn't his interest to do, seeing we have the keep of him to arrange

for, as one may say, Mr. Mallinson being the leading man in the split, and always looked to to give his support in anything important, besides taking the chair, and coming forward with gold upon the plate, because of its being a public situation ; and I'm glad to say Mr. Barton knows his place, and don't presume. And so, sir, we'll expect you in the back parlour as soon as you've got yourself rested and tidied up, and I'll tell Betsy as you won't want tea brought in, because of an early supper with us, which we always have when Mr. Barton comes in, poor man, of a Saturday night, so as he may get to bed soon, ready for Sunday."

And having made this ingenious domestic arrangement, and having assured Hugh that he need not feel at all bashful, for there was nobody but Mr. Barton and Sarah Matilda,

she returned to the back parlour, leaving her lodger to muse upon the pleasures of hope.

Which—at any rate the pleasures in the immediate foreground of the picture—were by no means so inviting as those of memory. Hugh would much rather have disposed himself once more at full length in that slippery easy-chair, and lived over again in imagination the almost dream-like events of the afternoon, than have taken the trouble of putting himself in a fit state for enjoying the treat which Mrs. Mallinson held out for his acceptance. However, spite of his surface faults and failings, Hugh Deeping had a kindly heart, one which was generally ready to minister to the satisfaction of others, even to the extent, sometimes, of personal inconvenience. And so with just one longing look at the solitary fireside where he thought

to have spent such a pleasant evening, he "tidied himself up," and went downstairs to make his first state appearance before Oresbridge society, in Mrs. Mallinson's back parlour.

CHAPTER XIX.

MRS. MALLINSON, in the absence of her husband, who seldom got out of his shop on Saturdays until nearly midnight, occupied the post of honour, a large arm-chair by the fire, comfortably apart from draughts or other inconveniences. In days gone by, when the provision-dealer and his family belonged to the old body, this same post of honour would have been acceded to any minister who happened to be a passing guest in the house. But amongst several other fallacies which the Mallinson people had discarded when they “went off with the

split," was the old, worn-out notion that the ministerial office had any superior claims to respect and distinction. The minister of Grosmont Road was looked upon as a needful appliance of the new cause, valuable in so far as he filled the chapel, and raised the collections, and secured the letting of the seats. If he failed to compass these important ends, he was changed, just as they would have changed their pulpit-cushions, or their communion cloth, and his place supplied by a fresh importation of more popular talent. Apparently their present minister, Mr. Barton, who sat on the cool side of the room, holding a skein of silk for Sarah Matilda, was not a man whom the heads of the Grosmont Road congregation delighted to honour; and as for esteeming him highly in love for his work's sake, that was a reach

of Christian perfection to which they never dreamed of attaining.

Mrs. Mallinson got up when Hugh came in, with a jerk that sent the scarlet fuchsias into a state of brisk activity.

“Very glad to see you, Mr. Deeping. Yon’s Mr. Barton sitting on the other side, and that’s my daughter, Sarah Matilda, the only one me and my husband’s got left. There was other three of them, but they was took unawares while they were little, which makes us set more store by her, as you may say. Sarah Matilda, let Mr. Deeping have that chair of yours; you can bring it nearer hand the fire for him, for I daresay he’s got the cold pretty well set into him with being all the afternoon in that draughty old place at Lyneton Abbots, as they say there isn’t such a place for draughts in the country round.”

Sarah Matilda went through an elaborate boarding-school curtsey, such as the young ladies at Miss Veneering's finishing establishment used to practise half an hour a day before the looking-glass, and then she brought Mr. Deeping the chair, as directed.

She was a smart, gaily-dressed girl of nineteen or twenty, put together with a solid, square-built sturdiness which seemed to preclude any human probability of her being "taken off unawares," like the younger members of her family. She was not at all unprepossessing-looking to persons whose taste in female beauty inclined towards a redundancy of breadth and colour; for there was a ruddy healthful robustness about her, which she vainly endeavoured, by tight-lacing and frequent drinking of very strong tea, to check. She was possessed of much brisk natural practicality, and almost

more than needful self-confidence, glossed over with a film of boarding-school politeness, through which, nevertheless, it kept striking up, threatening by-and-by to degenerate into her mother's boldness and complacency. She was straightforward and unabashed in everything she undertook, from the management of a public tea-tray, or the superintendence of a bazaar-stall, to the securing of a partner for life. A girl, moreover, who would never be backward in coming forward, for she had her father's tact and push, joined with the maternal effrontery which kept her, as it kept Mrs. Mallinson, from the remotest idea that anything either of them said or did could be otherwise than correct—the very thing that ought to be said and done.

She was engaged in an open and straightforward flirtation with Mr. Barton, under pre-

text of unravelling the tangled silk ; a flirtation which the minister, judging from his grave face and absorbed manner, did not greatly appreciate. At all events, he aided very little in the promotion of it, and by no means took advantage of his position as he might have done if so disposed.

He was a thoughtful, almost refined man, this Mr. Barton, evidently out of place amongst his present surroundings. Most likely accidental circumstances, rather than any innate instinct of rebellion, asserting itself in opposition to the over-strict discipline of Park Street, had made him "go off with the split," and become a religious teacher amongst its turbulent members. Something in his countenance, too, indicated that he had his own way of thinking about things, though he might be cautious in committing himself by speech or action.

A man whose daily bread depends upon the voluntary contributions of an uneducated and narrow-minded congregation, does well not to express opinions too openly. Still, it might be inferred, from a certain hidden strength underlying the grave meekness of his deportment, that Mrs. Mallinson's influence over him, great as she fancied it to be, was indeed a fancy, existing only in her own mind. It was very little of his nature that she had power to reach or comprehend. He wisely appeared to bend to the force of circumstances, but the real man within him stood erect all the time.

The female head of the Grosmont Road congregation seemed to have abandoned her intention of drawing Mr. Barton out in religious conversation. As soon as Hugh was fixed in his place, and the first little prelimi-

naries of social intercourse attendant upon the advent of a new guest in the back parlour had been disposed of, she called upon Sarah Matilda to favour them with a song, previously, however, intimating to Mr. Deeping that a very great treat was in store for him.

"She's very clever at her music, is Sarah Matilda. Me and her father spared no expense to have her taught proper, and got a forty guinea piano for her as soon as ever she finished off, so as she mightn't lose her practice. You see it's a thing that goes so soon, is music, if young people don't keep it up. I always say there's nothing wants keeping up to the mark like the piano. Let Mr. Deeping hear one of your new songs, Sarah Matilda ;" and here Mrs. Mallinson turned to her daughter, who had discarded Mr. Barton's offices as skein-holder, and was busy turning over the contents of a very

smart Canterbury ; " something that's plenty of tune in it ; and don't be afraid of letting your voice come out. She's a beautiful voice, Mr. Deeping, has Sarah Matilda, only you see she has such a foolish way of being nervous before strangers. It's such a thing is nervousness, I wish she would make an effort and get over it."

" Oh, Ma, I'm sure I couldn't help it if it was ever so. You know my heart palpitates so when I'm singing to anybody I'm not accustomed to, and my nerves all go in such a way while you wouldn't believe how distressing it is. But you'll excuse it, Mr. Deeping, I'm sure."

And Matilda looked up pleadingly to Hugh, whose thoughts were so far away from either her or her nervousness. However, he recollect ed himself sufficiently to say that he

could make allowances for the very distressing infirmity to which she was a martyr ; and then, as in duty bound, he conducted her to the piano and turned over the leaves for her, whilst, with no very striking outward manifestation of timidity, though she kept protesting between every verse that she was so nervous she didn't know what to do with herself, she went through one of the fashionable songs of the day, full of the customary sentimentalisms which modern ballad writers think proper to inflict upon their music-loving public.

The young girl really had a very good voice. Loud—when not under the dominion of that distressing nervousness, it must have been something wonderful for volume of sound—clear, well in tune, first-rate, as her mother expressed it, for leading off in a choir. Some of her notes were so musical that Hugh, little thinking

what the consequences might be, began to weave beneath them a very harmonious second, in that well-trained bass voice of his.

Sarah Matilda clasped her hands in a boarding-school ecstasy of delight. She had never heard anything so beautiful in all her life. It was quite equal, she said, to the very best bass voice that had ever been engaged at a hundred guineas a night for the Oresbridge concerts; so deep and rich and mellow, everything, in short, that a bass voice ought to be.

“Oh! Mr. Deeping, I’d no *idea* you were so musical, and I *do* so dote upon a bass voice, *don’t I, Ma?* I’ve said over and over again, if there was one thing I doted upon more than another, it was a good bass voice. Now *haven’t I, Ma?*”

And Sarah Matilda gave a triumphant glance past quiet little Mr. Barton, whose star had set

never to rise again, towards Mrs. Mallinson.

"Yes, my dear," replied that lady, "and it's been such a disadvantage to her, Mr. Deeping, not having anybody to practise with her. You see her Pa not being a musical man, and having no brothers nor anything of that kind, didn't give her no opportunity of duets, which I've always been sorry for; I'm uncommon partial to young people singing together. But I'm sure she won't be fixed in that way no more, now that we've found out what a beautiful voice you've got; and you must come down stairs whenever you've a mind to, and join in with Sarah Matilda. I'm sure she wouldn't object if you was to come in every night even, for she's such a taste for music, haven't you now, Sarah Matilda?"

Sarah Matilda, thus appealed to, slightly hung down her head, and with a modest look

in the direction of the new lodger, admitted that she had a taste for music, especially vocal music; only she was so very nervous when she was called upon to play before strangers. If Mr. Deeping would believe her, she really trembled so at that very moment, that she could almost faint away.

“Such a pity, my dear, and you ought to use your endeavours to get over it, oughtn’t she, Mr. Deeping? For she takes her high notes beautiful, if you could only hear her when she’s in the bosom of the family, and no strangers present. And now, then, let us have something else, Sarah Matilda, something that Mr. Deeping can join in with, and don’t give way, but let him hear you go up a good height. It’s such a thing is nervousness, when it interferes with a person taking their high notes.”

Sarah Matilda, nothing loth, yet thinking it only consistent with proper bashfulness to enter a mild protest against being “called upon” so often, when her nerves were distressing her so, turned to the piano once more; and poor Hugh, seeing no way of escape, was compelled to put in a “second” to song after song, until Betsy, coming in to lay the cloth for supper, introduced a pleasing change in the performance. When supper was over, Mr. Barton, who seemed to have dropped out of notice altogether, took his leave, and Hugh was going to do the same. But Mrs. Mallinson did not intend him to do anything of the sort.

“ You must sit a bit longer, Mr. Deeping, you must indeed. I’m sure we’re both of us uncommon glad to see you, and you’re not intruding, so don’t be afraid. I like young men that don’t presume; but we’re not looking at

it in that light at all, nor shan't do, whenever you like to come in of an evening. And now Mr. Barton's gone we'll have a bit more music, for there's nothing I like better than a bit of music of an evening, unless it be getting drawn out into profitable conversation. I meant to have got Mr. Barton drawn out, poor man! to-night, but——”

Hugh looked involuntarily towards the open door through which Mr. Barton, who was putting on his coat in the passage outside, must have heard every word, even had it been spoken in a voice more softly pitched than Mrs. Mallinson's. She understood the look, and hastened to assure Mr. Deeping that there was not the slightest occasion for any little punctilio of that kind in the present instance.

“ Oh! never mind the door being open, Mr. Barton knows that we never make no

concealments in this house; we always say what we think, does me and my husband, and if things is laid upon our minds to say as isn't agreeable to the pride of the flesh, the sooner they're done with the better. I wanted him drawn out in conversation, only the music was set on, and put it off in a manner, being such an unexpected surprise that you could join in with a second, and such a treat to Sarah Matilda. He has a very good gift in conversation, has Mr. Barton, poor man! when he gets drawn out, though his views on doctrines isn't always what me and my husband could wish, being too much on the practical enforcement, which we don't think profitable."

Mrs. Mallinson had got into an exposition again now, and forgot even the music. Hugh was glad for once that she should go to an

unlimited extent in the statement of her views, since it saved him from the necessity of "joining in" with Sarah Matilda in any more duets. And it was evidently such a satisfaction to her to have this opportunity of holding forth.

"We've been thinking, have my husband and me, that we ought to open our minds to him on the subject, or there must be a change looked out for before long. He's a man that won't get on in the ministry, is Mr. Barton, especially in our congregation, because of the people looking into things more than what most other congregations does. You see, we're not like the old body. We don't look to be put under our minister, and obey him blindfold, just as if we'd nothing to do, as you may say, but pay our money and take in what anybody chooses to say

to us. They're a thinking people, is the members of the split as my husband raised a year or two back, and the minister has to meet their views, and if he don't do it, we must have one looked out for as does ; and we've heard of a very likely young man as would be glad of an engagement to preach, and my husband was thinking of asking him over, to see if he was such as we should be agreeable to have."

"But you'll hear Mr. Barton for yourself tomorrow morning," continued Mrs. Mallinson, as Sarah Matilda, rather tired of this lengthy exposition, moved off to the piano, "for there's a seat in our pew as you're welcome to the use of, not being let at present, and no mention of the rent, which is five shillings a quarter; but I daresay we shan't disagree about that, being one of the best situations

in the chapel for seeing and hearing. And cushions too, and a carpet, and everything that's comfortable, and painted all through in imitation of the best oak, and the ceiling in a beautiful open-work pattern, so as I say it's a pity we haven't eyes on the top of our heads to appreciate it. For when Mr. Mallinson put himself at the head of the subscriptions, leading off with a couple of hundred pounds, which was four times as much as any of the rest of the split could afford, but we did it because of me and my husband being the chief support, and looked up to as burning and shining lights, I said to him that if we were going to have a chapel at all, we would have it done handsome, so as the old body shouldn't find occasion to look down upon it, and trust to Providence for the debt, which is something

heavy; but the bazaar last Christmas helped it off a good deal; and there isn't a better place of worship in Oresbridge now, than what me and my husband has been instrumental in raising in Grosmont Road. And so, sir, you'll be welcome to-morrow morning, to the end seat next the door, number twenty-five; but as you'll go with the family, there won't be no trouble in finding it."

Then Mrs. Mallinson sniffed conclusively, and resumed her seat by the fire.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.





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